



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



3 3433 07481607 9

S·FROM·7  
PRAIRIE·GARDE

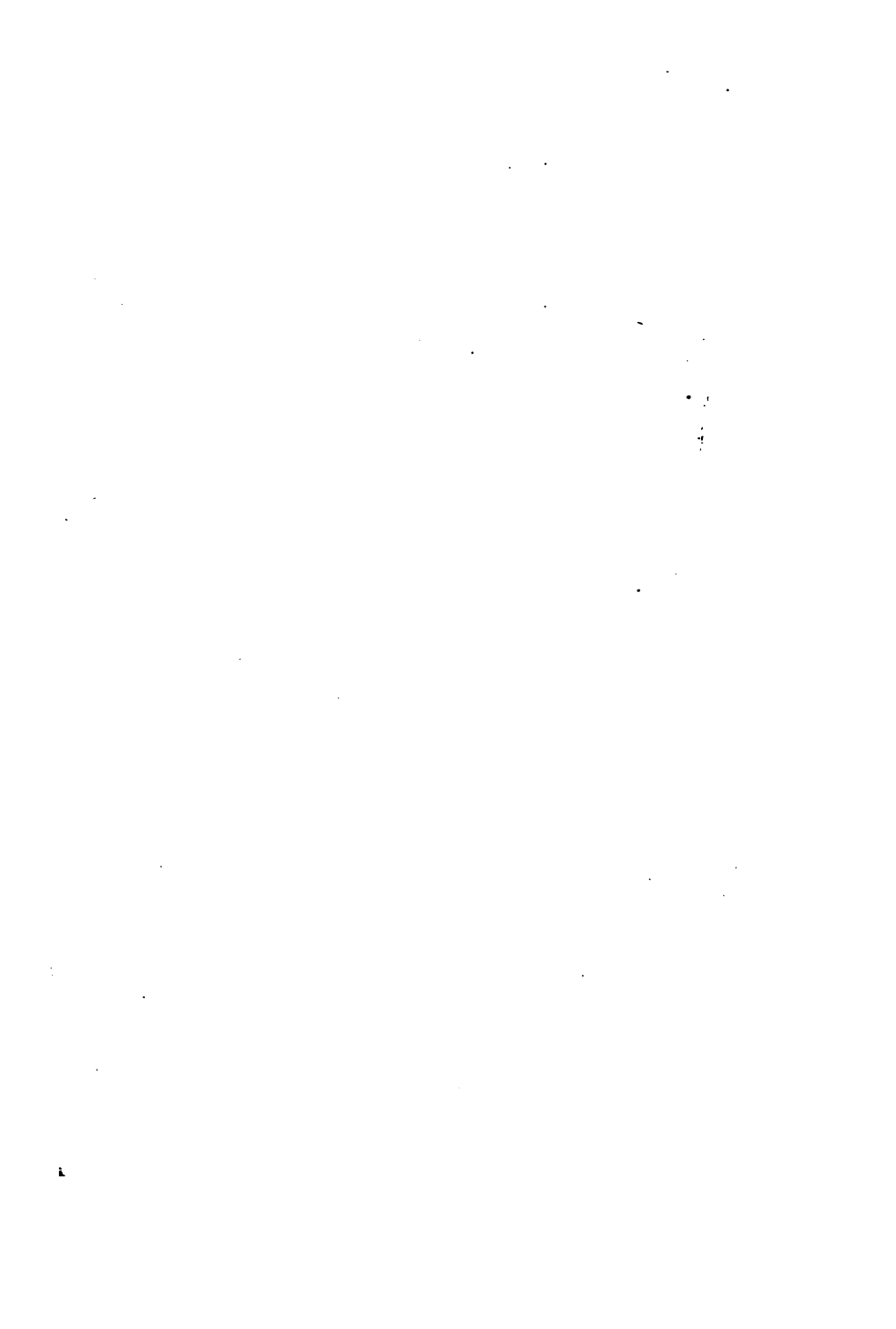
EDNA·WORTHLEY·UNDERWOOD

壽星公

Letlow (American)

—

Underwood  
NBW



LETTERS *from a*  
PRAIRIE GARDEN

***"A lord of dust, an emperor of dreams."***

**WANG PO OF THE SEVENTH DYNASTY**

# LETTERS FROM A PRAIRIE GARDEN

BY  
EDNA WORTHLEY UNDERWOOD



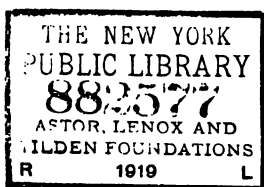
BOSTON  
*Marshall Jones Company*

MDCCCCXIX

*M. S. M.*

NEW YORK  
PUBLIC  
LIBRARY





Copyright, 1919  
By MARSHALL JONES COMPANY

THE PLIMPTON PRESS  
NORWOOD, MASS., U.S.A.

NOV 1919  
CLUB  
ASTOR

**DEDICATED**  
**TO YOUTH — AND THE**  
**SUNLIGHT ON THE PLAINS**



## FOREWORD

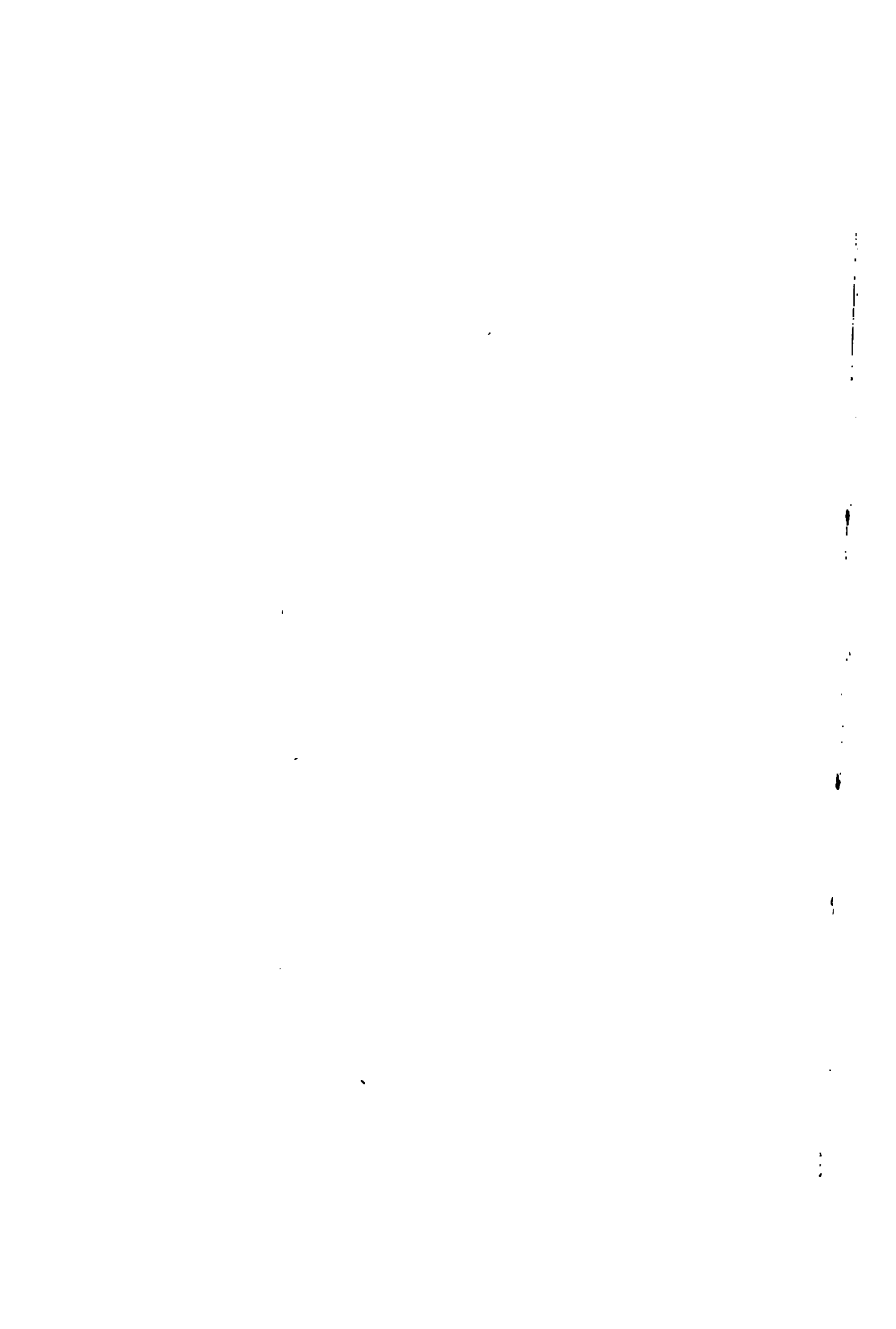
**T**HE "Letters from a Prairie Garden," are genuine letters and not fiction. They went through the mail. An explanatory word about their origin may not be amiss.

Some years ago a famous artist came to a certain mid-western city on business connected with his profession. He had an acquaintance who lived in the hotel where the writer lived at that time and with whom he talked over the phone. The writer frequently happened to be talking at the same time, and the wires crossing, he heard me laugh repeatedly, and he nicknamed me "the woman who laughs."

At length he called up the hotel clerk and asked to be permitted to talk over the wire with "the woman who laughs." The clerk connected my apartment.

In this way the "Letters" (which must now tell the rest of the story themselves) originated, and it explains likewise why the subjects discussed are so often pictures and objects of art. They were written to a connoisseur of things beautiful.

E. W. U.



**IN THE CITY**





## LETTERS *from a* PRAIRIE GARDEN

YOU WISH TO CORRESPOND WITH ME, with a woman whom you have not seen, of whom you know nothing? And just because by an accidental crossing of the wires you have heard a voice over the phone and called me "*the woman who laughs?*" You say you like laughter because laughter is rare in the world? You think I must be happy, and you wish to know some one who is happy when the rest of the world is sad? Am I happy?

Perhaps I am! And perhaps happiness is just a garment my heart wears in this present garden of time where I happen to be.

If I am happy it is because I have developed a philosophical indifference to results. I say to myself (and I believe and live accordingly), I am just a leaf upon a limitless river of matter, and it is not of the slightest consequence — to me nor to any one else — what becomes of the leaf. The river goes on forever. Sometime the leaf will find the sun.



I have found the world beautiful and interesting, and my dream and desire of it changing.

What makes my dream, you inquire?

Many things! Let me think!

When I awake in the morning I am glad to see the edge of the day gay with light. I think of the sparkling water of the cold bath which is awaiting me. After that is over, the good smell of coffee singing in the kitchen upon a black stove. As I walk to the dining room I see through a window, blue sky and swaying trees. This pleases me. While I am drinking the coffee I think of the things that I should like to do. My pleasure in them is not spoiled by the fact that there is little probability of my being permitted to do any of them.

What did I think of this morning with the coffee? I thought first (because the wind was high and the clouds were scudding ahead of it) that I should like to be a strong peasant woman putting wet, washed linen upon the line, under a blue sky, with wild, flying, white clouds and a rollicking wind. And then I thought I should like to rake the hay in the sunny grass land by the Loire, bare of head and unbound of neck, like those big-muscled peasant women of Lhermitte. And I should like to gather grapes and tread the wine in some high, mountain vineyard of old Spain, with the violet silk of the sea beneath, and above, thin summits sharp with light.

These letters of mine will be merely a sort of pillaw *à la* the oriental manner of making; fact, fancy, criticism, a commingling of whatever the winds that arise with each new sun, may blow across my mind.

And since I like dreams better than reality, you shall be to me always a dream — my dream correspondent. I hear you protesting. But that is useless! In not permitting you to see me, I do not permit you to become disillusioned. My letters to you will be merely "*des songes du plus beau des soirs.*"

When you are tired of me I will fade back into that unreality from which I came. That is best. Write if you wish.

E.

(*Some months later*)

I AM WRITING THIS TUESDAY NIGHT — an answer to your letter — just before dressing for dinner, in order that you may get it in the morning at the studio, before you begin work, to have with the first pipe smoke of that good tobacco you have told me about, which inspirits you for the day.

To-night I see *The Ballet*. It may be we shall be sitting near each other, and all unconsciously our eyes will meet. Then when the orchestra is playing the Bacchanale of Glosunow, some vibratory intelligence may pass between us, and tell us how we met in the flesh once long ago, and how now we are groping in the dark to find each other. Life is only a somewhat intelligent playing of blind man's buff at best.

The dinner hour has come. Good night.

E.

**M**Y WINDOWS ARE OPEN. THE BLUE wind comes in. Strangely enough it comes from the direction of your studio. I visualize you clearly — you whom I have not seen, — and in front of you the great canvas and the little brushes. I see you blow purple smoke rings. I know what thoughts float upon them.

I took a nap out of doors Sunday — in a field. The grass is good to sleep upon. I said to myself — it is high time I got acquainted with the grass, because I am going to sleep under it long. I hope the grass will like me! But the worms are going to be disappointed. When I first go there — to sleep under the grass — I shall say to them: Look as hard as you wish! Search all you can! You will not find a thing! I have lived up the joy of me. Not a single shining particle will you find!

If it is for joy you are seeking, go to him who has the soul of an elf, and who lived once by an Irish Sea, and who told me how he used to play the fiddle in Dooney!

E.

I HAVE BEEN OUT TO-DAY AGAIN, THE good wind buffeting me about. In my eyes, opposite the golf links upon the hill, are trees whose leaves are the color of all the bronzes in the world. Some of them are the hue of dragons that crawl in stone down walls of old Korean palaces where I dream myself sometimes to be.

This Korean palace where you and I have been so many times is lonely and deserted. No one else goes there now. It stands upon the shore of the sea where the sand is fine as dust and black as powdered jet. The waves that come tumbling in upon it — fretted by the little islands that dot the Asian coast — are of a blue that is pure and fine. And they have ruffles of foam upon them like white lace. How happy I am! Nothing can spoil a pleasure for me here. And this palace is full of faded and forgotten memories, that quiver into transient being again on the wings of the night, thrilled back to life by the evocative power of you and me.

There are faint perfumes that we can not grasp enough to distinguish, that float teasingly out of reach, faint ghosts of sandal wood and cinnabar. They drift over us and touch our eyelids. Dis-

turbing thoughts vanish. We open our eyelids again in a dim, gold room. We hear music evoked from leather and thin silver strings. Then we go out down a carved stairway that is quaint and black, to that sea that smiles blue on to the southern Pole, to swim and plunge. We come gayly back to the midnight of the palace and up the carved stairway, where black slaves dry our bodies and rub into them scented oils.

Thereupon you tell me that you have a secret. You take my hand to lead me and make me promise to shut my eyes tightly and not to look. I open them again in a room which I have never seen, a somber room, lined round with ancient chests where dull, inset metals show. You open the chests with an air of gayety and bravura. They are filled with clothes — tunics — armor of metal; embroidered gauzes, tissues, and soft cotton fabrics from Indian looms.

You dress as a warrior — a samurai — in overlapping silver and jade. You are strong limbed and splendid to look upon. I wear a robe of old rose, whereon is limned in shadowed silver the fruit of Buddha. As soon as we are dressed you rush me away to dine in a lattice-work pavilion through which we can see waves glitter. You tell me that the winking light upon them is the laughter of the pagan gods — their undying pagan laughter — laughing on and on. They bring us fruit, strange and of a marvelous fra-

grance, of which we do not even know the name. I say that it is good. I put my lips to it. I stick my teeth into it. And then I run back to the palace. You follow. I run on and on. You can not catch me. We play hide and seek in the ancient dwelling of the dim, rich rooms. At last I pause and wait for you to find me. This room has seats of gold-threaded brocade. Around the walls are tiny balls of painted glass suspended by strings of silk. I can hear them shiver and shiver — these tiny glass balls in the air.

This is the gorgeous dwelling which I build myself out of dreams! In the real world it may be that I am like that Peri whom Mahomet cursed and made to stand outside the gates of Paradise. But in the world of dreams all things are mine.

E.

**I** AM AFRAID I CAN NOT AGREE WITH you! (And what right have I to disagree with an artist like yourself?) I do not believe in that old dictum of the Greek philosophers that art was meant to imitate something. Art does not imitate! It creates. It builds a little independent world of pleasure. It is the visible expression of joy. It makes on its own responsibility a miniature universe. Back of it is the divine force — love. It is really a part of our religion and our faith. It is related to all things noble the mind has compassed.

Back in the unsentient, voiceless beginning, where under the name of attraction the power is still effective, it draws crystals together in the depths of the earth into marvelous, glittering harmony, and frost particles on window panes into mathematical figures. Because this is the motive power back of it — and not the desire to imitate anything — we understand why it is not submissive to command. What king could command our love and our joy? How much gold would it take to set the frost to building on the windows? If it were true that its province were imitative, what does music try to imitate? And what does architecture imitate?



It can not be commercialized. The mainspring is something unrelated to greed. When the artist works from any motive besides the vision within him and the joy of doing, the result can not be of consequence. This creative sprite is free. The art of primitive races is finer than anything we can do to-day, just because this principle of joy was more active. As soon as reason, effort, ambition, begin to overbalance intuitive power, art dies, and then it begins to be commercialized. It must always be the result of *not trying*.

Hear what Degas said to a young artist who questioned him about success: "In my day we did not arrive. In my day we worked for art, for beauty, for the mere pleasure of working, and we never thought of buyers, nor medals, nor money, nor applause. . . . We despised — we ignored — everything that was not our art."

E.

WHEN YOU CALLED ME UP ON THE phone this morning, I heard sleep upon your voice. I knew just how heavily it was lying in your eyes. I wondered if you had dreamed of that deserted Korean palace by the sea whose sand is black as powdered jet.

You would be surprised — and greatly — if you knew the places you have visited with me. With me in my dreams you have been a greater traveler than was Marco Polo the Venetian.

I must procure another copy of my picture of Herodias to send you. I am surprised that you do not know it. Constant drew her. I keep her always near to make me remember the antique world of splendid calm. I like pictures, drawings, units of decoration, better than books. One can not understand a picture at a glance any better than a book. Time and silence are needed. Lines that are seemingly unimportant have much to say.

It is in Eastern art that I am especially interested. The Chinese have color terms that delight me. They have a blue they call "blue of the sky after the rain," and "blue of the sky after the snow." Then there is another they desig-

nate "degradation of the rose." What a weary and regretful red that must be. It is the black-eyed races that have understood and loved color best. If the great colorists of the world could be listed I think a majority of them would be found to have dark eyes.

Old Chinese virtuosos of precious porcelains possess a surprising collection of information — which they declare authentic — about these beautiful objects they have loved. There is a story told by Su Tung-po that in the year eleven hundred A.D. there was in existence a pair of vases that gave the combined music of the flute and the organ, whenever their owner was happy and giving a banquet. As soon as the banquet was over and the lights out, and the guests departed, the music ceased. In no other way could it be lured forth.

Wan Yen-chih writes an essay about an earthenware basin which he once owned. In the winter ice-pictures formed in it daily, and no two pictures were repeated. Some days he looked within and saw peach blossoms and peonies; on other days wild geese, bamboo thickets and mountains, pink-legged herons and flying cranes. He writes: "I afterward had it mounted with silver and preserved in a silk-lined case. When the cold weather comes I invite guests to enjoy the sight." And there were censers that gave the sweet refreshing sound of the

voices of wild birds hidden in thickets. Especially beloved was one which was nick-named "the pee-wit censer." Who would think those dull-looking, pig-tailed Chinamen had thoughts like these?

I should like to have one of those numerous honeymoons — which you declare you are desirous of spending with me — in southeastern China, by a little lake called *Biwa*, because it is the shape of the two-stringed lute; in a toy house of bamboo buried in wisteria. At night the wisteria by the lake of the lute is the color of silver smoke. Perhaps it would not be bad to have as many honeymoons as there are yellow suns in those fabulous prints of old China.

E.

I HAVE A PICTURE BY FRAGONARD OF a French lady holding a *billet doux* daintily between two pointed fingers, a round-eyed poodle beside her, and painted in front of a leaded glass window in a blond satin boudoir. The first time I looked at that picture I longed to be in the old France Fragonard knew. How merrily and happily did they live then! With what wit! With what grace! With what freedom! They did not spend their time in *re-forming* and *remaking* the world. They looked out upon it with clear Greek eyes and saw that it was good and let it alone. One entire afternoon I had the picture in front of me fancying that I was making merry at expense of the lady of the beads.

I should like the France of Fragonard! I should like to live there in a great, grey chateau, in which there was a hidden room known only to two people. Sometime — when we were in that hidden room — gayly and frivolously dressed and radiant with life, we could not find the spring to let us out. We never find it. And there we die together in our gay clothes, our folly and our laughter. Some decades later — Balzac, say, finds us, and writes a story about us, a persua-

sive little book of old French love — of life in the great free century.

What a merry gentleman of old France you would have made with your grace of story telling and your Irish laughter!

E.

I AM BUSY TO-DAY. I AM GIVING TO a dealer in Dream Land the order to bind my Greek and Latin books. They are little books, all of them, and printed on parchment or paper that is old and fine. They are to be bound in rough leather and white pig skin.

My Tacitus I think is an Elzevir. (The covers and front pages are gone.) It is not larger than two inches by four. The Terence was printed in London (*typis* F. Collins) in 1708. Virgil is of a delightful size, about three inches wide by five in length. It is decorated with a line engraving and bears the stamp of London 1688. The Horace is even smaller and older. It was made in Holland and it is of a charming format. *Roterdami Idibus Novembri 1667*, the last page informs us plainly. Some are from Amsterdam, others from Paris. One or two are distinguished by the notes of Casaubon, but unfortunately the covers are missing, hence you understand my haste. I do not wish them to perish in their old age for lack of a protecting overcoat. A few covers are to be colored purple flecked with crimson, which is the color of a Siberian amethyst. And a few of these covers are to be set with unpolished gems and dull gold, after the

manner of the sacred books of old Russia. But for my own personal pleasure I care only that a book be small in size and clear of print.

On top of the cases where these pagan writers are, I shall, in spring (And is it not always spring when the heart is happy?) place jars filled with pale crocuses and slender iris. These are the flowers they loved best in life.

My tiger on the floor is talkative to-day, and reminiscent. He has promised to tell me lots of things of love in the jungle and life under tropic stars. I am going to have him tell me how the black rain falls on those sultry tropic nights, with the fitful wind between. And when he tells me I shall recall how blue the water is where the lotus flower was born.

I have placed him facing my picture of Hero-dias. They look alike, you know. And they used to know each other long ago — long, long before she became a woman, when she lived in the jungle with him. It promises well, does it not? And he is going to tell me how once when she was sleeping beside her lord, the tetrach, upon a bed of cedar wood and gold, upon the palace roof, she heard him calling in the desert, calling to her across the night. That was the way he met his death — my tiger — and became just a rug upon my floor. When he tells it all to me I will write it down in detail for you to read.

E.



WHAT MADE YOU TAKE IT INTO YOUR head all of a sudden, my good Unknown, that you wished to read "Madame Bovary"? To be sure I will send you my copy. That — in my opinion — and Turgenev's "Smoke" are among the most perfectly constructed books that have been written. And a good month's work for Flaubert was twenty pages. The French are still writing of "Salammbô" and "Madame Bovary." And the French know what art is. I saw in a magazine just the other day an article entitled "Bovaryism" — in the *Mercure de France*. I did not read it. I did not have time just then. So I do not know whether it was flesh or good red herring. But "Madame Bovary" was very much flesh. You will enjoy that book. And you may like her. I fear I shall be jealous of these women of the world of books whom you are sure to like and to see so often.

There is Tess of the d'Urbervilles, with the lips so red a man remembered them always, and they sent him to destruction. Dear Unknown, look not upon lips like hers when they are red! And there is a woman in an old Italian garden who has a throat such as the Pre-Raphaelites painted.

She is very white. She is frail. She has eyes as deeply blue as the sea by Sicily, and hands such as only women of race have, and a voice sweet with the singing vowels of Italy. D'Annunzio has shown her to us in "*Le Vergini delle Rocce*." (The Maidens of the Rock.) Dear Unknown, I pray you never to go near her! She is more dangerous than Circe. And you must not look upon Foscarina, which is the name d'Annunzio gives to Duse in "*Il Fuoco*." (The Flame.) And you must keep away from Anna Karenina, that subtle Slav. The dangerous Calmuck and the treacherous oriental are both in her just underneath the surface. There is Sonnica, too, the hetaira, in her seductive Greco-Roman garden by Sargentum (as Vlasco Ibañez portrays her) when swarthy, black-browed Hannibal waited with his angry legions outside the gate. Go not near those old gardens of Greece! And I should be afraid of Beatrice and Fiammetta and Francesca. But if I were a man I should be guilty of no infidelities, not even of the brain and of art. I should love only Thais. For me no other woman would exist.

E.

**Y**OU DECLARE THE REASON I WILL not let you see me is because I have so many wrinkles? Of course! Why did you not guess it before? And you say at the same time that you do not like the Herodias I sent you?

Mortal sins, both of them! Of course I have wrinkles. They are the hieroglyphs of living. My life is written there, the sum total of my thinking, of how many times I have frowned and laughed. When I meet you on that star in space you shall read them for me. Perhaps you will find some that you made yourself. Will they be sad or merry ones?

When I become old — *and wrinkled* — perhaps I shall go to sleep forever. Or perhaps I shall live and read Catullus, who was the spirit incarnate of youth, that glorious, golden youth of Rome. (I have another edition of him!) It may be I shall decide to live on in order that I may find out for myself, just by how much he is the most perfect poet. When I think of Catullus I think in symbols, and oftenest of an amber honey.

Or perhaps when I get old I shall take to drinking cordials to give me momentarily the warmth

and the pleasant glow of youth, such cordials as Louis the Fourteenth had brewed for his despairing old age. And it may be I shall be like Gautier and dream wonderful things over the light of candles. But better than all, I think I would rather live on, and meet you — on some radiant planet in space. And there always I shall have the advantage of you, as years count, because I have the soul of a nymph and I have never grown up.

I do not know how I can forgive you for not liking my Herodias. She is my splendid, tawny beast without a soul, who rests and brings back joy to me after the presence of modern women. She does not preach any sermon. She does not try to teach anything. She never belonged to a woman's club nor desired to become a suffragette. She has never had any fads. She is not a devotee of -ologies or -isms. She is not acquainted with new thought or old thought. She cares neither for uplift work, aviation, the fourth dimension, a meatless diet, nor the unsolved problems of another life. This is one of the great pictures. And you do not like it!

Constant's Herodias! Please look at her again. Observe the splendid massive shoulders that at the same time are so marvelously supple. The skin that covers them is tawny and softer than satin. See, too, how he has painted a tigress and a woman at one and the same time. The

hands — their marvelous repose, their strength, their cruelty. The terrific quiet of that waiting posture which she could change more swiftly than your eye could record the movement. The beaten gold above her brow. The huge circlets in her ears. And the one figure of adornment upon that silken gauze that is wrapped about her — that barbaric, embroidered leaf. Where do you suppose she found it, that unique gauze with its one distinguished decoration? In the many conversations we have had I have never been able to make her tell me.

(Of course she talks to me! But she would not to you because you do not like her.)

She does not wish any one else to own a robe like it. And yet I think I know where it came from. On the tablelands of Iran, that go crawling up, stepwise, to those tortured mountain summits that frown down upon India, there are little earth-built villages set in green meadows dotted with white poppy flowers. It was in one of those little villages, by the old caravan road that leads to Ispahan, that that gauze was woven. The women there wear colored and embroidered gauzes to cover their faces instead of the black veils of certain other cities of Persia. (I hope there will be one left for me to buy when I get there!)

See how splendidly Constant placed her, against a dark, hard background, and seated upon a

rough rug of fur, that is as untamed and harsh as her own soul. And the mouth of the immortal thirst! The deep shadowed eyes that make one think of the brutal twilights of a primitive world. The suppleness of the joints, which is that of the jungle-born! The throat, great-muscled and strong! But the shoulders are most beautiful of all. Women of to-day do not have shoulders like those.

She has looked down upon me from the bare, ugly walls of hotel rooms in many cities for years. I can not forgive your not liking her. You say she has no soul? Of course not! That is why she was such a success and wore the crown of a queen. Heart and soul will ruin the best regulated woman in the world.

I have a pictured Fortuna, too, — a drawing — that I enjoy and look at every day when I am writing. Some old Italian drew her. She is a woman poised with one foot upon a rolling wheel of gold. The wheel has two small wings. And she is going — O! so far! — and so happily. But she does not know where, nor does she care. She is just like me, you see, and the philosophy of me, which is a philosophy of bravery and defiance. Perhaps she is whirling away to the arms of an immortal lover, just as some day I shall be whirled away to some glowing planet in space.

E.

**A**FTER I CAME IN FROM WALKING last night what do you suppose I did? I sat down and played for you. As if you could hear! That was foolish. I played for you Chopin's Nocturne, opus thirty-one, for nowhere else do the shadows of sleep fall so sweetly.

A year ago I heard an Italian orchestra play Chopin's "Funeral March." For weeks after that I heard it continually. Waking or sleeping that melody was passing through my brain. It became an obsession. I could not get away from it. After a while it reverberated in my heart. I felt it attuning my muscles, swaying them with the fatal rhythms of destruction. It made me suffer. Wherever I looked I saw the visible melody. I saw it upon the walls, upon the sky. I saw it fluttering across the fields written in a language that none but I could read. The wheels of the trains and the motor cars played it. The feet of people kept time to it upon the street. Then it stopped. I heard it no more. And a dream came to take its place — a torturing dream of the night.

No sooner had I fallen asleep than I saw myself dead and taken to a morgue. I saw distinctly

the streets through which I passed and the buildings that lined them. I could draw a picture of them accurately. The undertaker's establishment was a low, one-storied structure situated on the corner, and behind it was a red, brick-paven alley. When they took me in, the owner got up from a little bed against the wall where he had been sleeping. He said he had promised to see to me himself in order to make sure that I was dead. They placed me upon a projecting slab of white marble in which there were dull colored veins. I thought sadly: Now he is going to make my veins like the marble. Then I smelled the chemicals. They hurt me because their smell was bitter. I thought of life — which had slipped away from me now — and I recalled the scent of violets in spring, which Petronius said was sweeter than the sin-forgiving incense in the early church. For days I smelled those dreadful chemicals, when I was wide awake and moving about busied with my daily occupations. They suffocated me. They poisoned my food so that I could not eat. They floated over whatever I drank like an invisible gas. I could not get away from them. Then spring came, and summer, and the dream vanished not to return.

E.



I LIKE THAT NICK-NAME YOU GAVE me — "*wood nymph*." That is because I am invisible and all you know of me is my laughter. You say that once I laughed at the great god Pan, who then for punishment turned me into a woman? What a delightful fancy! And you can remember all about it? You were there at the time peering through the reeds? I do not recall how you looked that day. Describe yourself to me! Were you of the family of goat-footed Pan?

But what if time and the sad experiences of living should make the nymph a woman? What if it should wrap about her the stern garment of humanity and stifle her laughter? I am sure that it is better to laugh than to love. What a tragedy it would be for a wood nymph to grow old. Think of one grown faded, whose dimples had turned to wrinkles, and whose laughter had lost its freedom and its grace! When women grow old they should wear veils over their faces just as do some Eastern women in their youth.

There was a saying among the Greeks like this: "May you be loved but may you never love." They knew what was best. And it was the Greeks who discovered the nymphs. E.

IT IS SUNDAY AND IT IS RAINY. I AM not upon the links, greatly as I love the rain and the mist upon the hills. I am sitting quietly at home watching the rain fall.

I am sure that in pagan days the nymphs, instead of growing old, faded back into the trees and flowers and were forgotten. No one would think of grieving for them who knew only joy. When they faded back into the trees — so long ago — joy faded with them. It is something we see only occasionally to-day.

This peculiar, unreasoning sadness which *modernité* brought with it has destroyed, at one time and another, much beauty. It destroyed the glad, white cities of the Greek world. It silenced the songs of the troubadours. It changed good old beef-eating, wine-drinking "Merrie England" into the England of the angular-faced, grey-clad Puritan.

Anatole France in a grave and scholarly manner has poked fun at this sad-visaged morality in his *Thais*. When this decadent Greek courtesan — as he tells the story — was the most famous woman of pleasure in the world, and at the same time its delight and its rare seduction, a

### 30    LETTERS FROM A PRAIRIE GARDEN

monk in the Thebaid Waste kept thinking of her red lips and likewise of her soul condemned to hell. Overpowered by the thought of Thais, he left his cell and journeyed to Alexandria to save her soul.

Here he pursued her with his ascetic ideas. She was incapable of combating the logic of priests. She left at length the luxurious city, and bare of feet, accompanied him to a convent in the waste. Upon this long journey to the convent, he was tortured by the vague and floating perfumes that the moving body of Thais left upon the desert air. When they reached the convent she entered it and took the vows. There she remained until she died.

Now when he who had gone on to his own place of prayer and seclusion heard of the approaching death of Thais, he made haste for the convent. When he saw her dead and robed for the grave, and they were celebrating her with honor, and he knew that her soul was saved, was he happy? No, indeed! And he should have been happy should he not? But he was far from it! He grieved. He was beside himself with rage and regret — because he had not enjoyed the beauty of Thais. He was of Greek blood — or else he was skilled in Greek learning. When he saw her rigid in death he knew — being a Greek — that a perfect line is not such a bad morality. He forgot his religion. He forgot his ascetic

vows, overcome with grief. Anatole France, with his trained sense of beauty, enjoyed making that story's ending.

I, too, have loved the beauty of Thais. That is why nothing could induce me to see her portrayed upon a modern stage. Fancy a woman of to-day trying to impersonate Thais! How wrong would be her body, her gestures, and particularly the look within her eyes! She would be as unsatisfactory to me as those huge, angular, English women Tadema has seated among his Grecian marbles. I should not dream of finding a realization of this antique beauty in seeing either Farrar or Garden in the name part. Farrar has generations of New England ancestry and tradition in her blood, and her face is a New England face, whether she wears the gems of Thais or the mantilla of Carmen. How could she realize a pagan beauty — *of Greek blood*? Garden is an Irish woman and still further away in face and nature. Temper and audacity can not supply the proper emotion or the requisite illusion. Yet what difference does the story of a libretto make? I go to hear the music. In the music I can see what I wish. The libretto is only a hook to hang the music on. It is merely an excuse for being. Why should we care more about it than the hook some handsome gown hangs upon?

Why did not Da Vinci paint her? He never saw her face, you say? Of course not! But he

could have dreamed it. There is a little red chalk drawing of his in the Louvre that has just such wonderful lines. Only in this drawing the eyes are cold; they are the eyes of an age of asceticism. But it has that meager fineness that I know the face of Thais had, a certain sternness of modeling, such as I have seen upon antique coins.

Sometimes I ruffle the leaves of Latin writers looking for the name of Thais. I have a grudge at Catullus because he does not mention her. And I have always thought that the soul of Catullus was like the face of Thais—in her early youth. Propertius does better. He mentions her twice.

*"Turba Menandræ fuerat nec Thaidos olim  
Tanta in qua populus lusit Erichtonius."*

To me this Latin has an especial charm because the name of Thais is upon it. I believe that the other mention of her in Propertius is in the Fifth Elegy of Book Five.

The books I enjoy most and read oftenest are those that were written before this sad modern world had become a fact. Soon after dinner last night I crawled happily into bed, there to read undisturbed an elegy of Propertius. An elegy meant something merry and promising interest to the Roman of old. We find in it as in a diary the incidents and the indiscretions of his life.

E.

**I**T IS TOO BAD — I AGREE WITH YOU — that we do our talking on paper when the same sky hangs over us and — for the moment — we call the same city home. There are so many things, too, that I wish to do with you! What are they, you ask? Well, — this is one of them. I wish to read Heinrich Heine with you, in German, his prose. It is the finest in the world of the kind, just as he was the world's greatest wit. Poor naughty, pitiful, blasphemous Heine! Some one asked him one day what he thought God would do with him his tongue was so wicked. Like lightning came the answer: "He will forgive me! It is His business."

You must promise not to read Heine without me. How can that be, you ask, since we are never to meet? It may not be in this life! But that does not make any difference. The promise will hold good just the same. We will read him together on some star in space. Is not that something to look forward to? Is not that worth not meeting me here? We will read the wonderful things that that pitiful heart of his wrote about love on the planet Venus, some rare evening of a planet's summer. And coasting along the canals of Mars we will read what he wrote of war

and his description of the face of Napoleon. In that star which the Persians call Anahid, because an odalisque plays there on a lute, we will read what he said of music and his story of the playing of Paganini. And in some mist-girdled planet, we will read his fancies of the North Sea out of whose frozen fogs he learned a new kind of verse and became the first German poet of the sea. I should like to read those memoirs of his which — I believe — have not yet been printed. He said just before he died that the memoirs were his greatest work in prose. There was a report at the time of his death, that they had been sold by a member of his family. They have lain buried from the curious all these years in the secret archives of the Imperial Library of Vienna. The Hohenzollerns and Hapsburgs can get along well enough without knowing all the scorpion stings he gave them. He said once that the Germans hoped they would never find any more Napoleon heads among their people; the Hohenzollerns have continued to hope something similar of the head of Heine.

There have been no impassioned idealists since Heine, who have written as he wrote, with the eloquence of deep conviction. He was the connecting link between two different periods of time — the eighteenth century — upon whose threshold he stood — and the world we know where everything was to change.

I have always been in love with Heine. Indeed the men whom I have loved have been long dead. Mine have been loves of the brain and of art, sexless infidelities of a dreamer. I have loved Ferdinand La Salle, a friend of Heine. I loved Petronius, the patrician, who declared that good in no wise differs from evil. I loved the youthful Sophocles who danced and sang for the returning victors of Salamis. I loved Goethe — as women have always loved him — that handsome, youthful Goethe who posed for his portrait in Rome standing proudly by the side of the Apollo Belvedere. Now you can see how we are going to enjoy ourselves on that planet in space! There, like Orion the Hunter, who bore the bow of gold, you will hunt down and make real all the old vain dreams of the earth. And there time will have no power over us, neither you nor I will be the subjects of its disenchanting laws.

E.



**Y**OU DID NOT KNOW, DID YOU, THAT I have ever so many homes? You are incredulous? You smile scornfully because you know I have not a sou? It is true nevertheless! And I take pleasure in journeying from one to the other. I really can not see how people live who have only one house to live in. That is a sure evidence of poverty. I do not know of any millionaire who has so many and such satisfactory houses as I.

They who have dreams, have nothing else, you object? You are right. I have found this to be true. I who can lay claim to no larger estate of worldly wealth than Markham says that poor Villon possessed — “The boughs of a tossing tree” — have a dream-estate and thereon a home. This particular home is a rambling, colonial farmhouse far to the north, among the New England mountains, and sufficiently removed from the storm-vexed Atlantic to catch only occasionally its mists and fogs. It is situated upon a hill of slight elevation overlooking meadowland, black forests, and far blue mountains. It is a primitive farming country. The whistle of a locomotive is not heard here nor the

noise of a street car. In the little village, some ten miles away, there, too, is peace and the rustic grace of an earlier century.

Within my old red farmhouse there is little that savors of the modern world. In the kitchen, which has a white, sanded floor, there are brick ovens for baking. In the other rooms there are rough-hewn fireplaces, black and spacious. For lighting there are only candles. When I grow old I shall be like Gautier, who said that there were only two things that could give him pleasure at the last, and one was the light of candles. In short, in my farmhouse there will not be much that tells of to-day. On the bare floor there will be home-made rugs. I shall sleep between slightly yellowed, home-woven sheets of linen. In my library there will be only books of other ages. Upon the walls will hang prints made by the men of eighteenth-century England and France, with an occasional early Dutch etching. There will be a few jars of undecorated pottery whose charm will be their color and form. For the rest there will be an austere bareness.

Here I shall come for two months of the year; May and November. In May it will be to enjoy the fragile, fugitive fairness of spring far to the north. Outside my old grey farmhouse then the fields will have the laughing, joyous green we see in modern French art. They will be dotted with daisies so surprisingly white that they shine

like stars. There will be gold swinging buttercups, and gnarled apple trees fantastically flowered with pink. And trailing over all raveled fleeces of floating mist, the ghosts of the vanishing snow.

Here twice a year I shall have a house party to keep me company. In the spring it will be made up of frail, beautiful, frivolous women, as irresponsible as the flowers outside in the fields. In these great bare rooms, they will dance merrily through the pale, northern nights, dressed in fragile and frolicsome gowns of gauze, and they will laugh and say the most foolish and extravagant things in the world with the sweetest of lips. I shall lean by the open window and watch them and listen, and think how like them is the scent of the lilac that comes in through the window. Looking at them I shall learn to love perfect lips that are perfectly false and the irresponsibility of human flowers under the spell of spring. I shall learn that beauty is worth having at any price.

And they will dance on, these beautiful women, while I watch them, and make merry, until the candles die, and the stars are dull dots in a windy sky, looking like their own crushed dresses of gauze in the early dawn. And as they drift down the great hall and away from me, I shall not know nor care whether they were really flowers or stars. And I shall stand alone by the window and wait for something that never comes. Then

I shall look out upon the pallid day that has lost its delight and its stars, and I shall feel the winds that sweep down over these northern mountains, winds that are lonely and austere.

In the autumn, in November, my house party will be of brilliant people, both men and women; musicians, artists, dreamers, fantastic carvers of pictures out of fleeting words. I shall have them to help make me forget for a moment that life is sad and that death must be. And always through this month of November the grey rain will fall, in fine, sharp lines, looking like the background of an old wood-cut, and the brilliant leaves of autumn will be upon the ground, the trees black and bare; and in the distance the frown of black forests and the delicate blurred blue of mountains. On the sloping fields beside my dwelling there will be piles, house high, of glowing, golden pumpkins, greenish yellow squashes, and burnished gourds, which give out light. When night comes, as in those old lost nights of May, we shall make merry. There will be great fires burning in all the rooms, which keep the resinous scent of aromatic woods and fret the floor with shadows. And at times some one, perhaps some subtle Slav, will play upon the piano feverish and forgotten melodies, or the delicate fancies of Scarlatti. Then music will hold us with its spell, and no one will speak a word.

Again we shall dine late at a great table quivering with candles. Brilliant, unforgettable things will be said, and we shall talk wildly and well, play with thought, with words, as with a juggler's balls of iridescent glass, and drink and drink and be happy. Every once in a while there will be a pause in the merriment, as if overmastering Fate said "*Hush!*" And we shall shiver at the wail of the wind, premonition of the northern winter, and hear the rain beating upon the pane. Each one will feel for a moment in his heart, the black space of the storm outside and the unmeasured leagues of night. Then the merriment will rise higher and higher. Defiance will be heaped on joy. Time will have lengthened the candle flames. Inspiration will come with a delirium of joy. And they will talk wildly and more madly, laugh on and on, making believe bravely that life is good, until again as in the old lost nights of May, the candles die and they steal away to sleep a heavy sleep, that has neither dreams nor remembrance, to wake and look up at a sky like the soft grey breast of a wild duck, a sky soon to grow black above the mountains and from which sad snow straggles down. I shall watch them go away, my guests, like the glittering gold memory of that dream which is life. I shall be alone with the roaring fires and the bitter winter that rushes down over the northern hills.

E.

**I** HAVE MADE A DISCOVERY! I AM writing to tell you about it! The soul of Heinrich Heine dwells in the purple passion flower; and the soul of Mary of Scotland in the purple iris. And thereby hangs a tale; a romantic and fascinating tale, which I perhaps will write for you some day — if it is not too long — a tale of how, by what means, they happened to reach the same color key. The reason that I can not tell it to you now is because the bees are beginning to swarm in my steam radiator, which sets me to thinking of the meadows of Sicily, and Theocritus, and Simaetha, with her love-prayer to the moon. They are charming bees (when they do not buzz too noisily). They are rapidly luring me away to a garden like that old one which men have said was situated eastward in Eden.

But Eden is anywhere, I suppose, where happiness is.

E.

## HAVE YOU ANY MUSICAL FRIENDS?

I do not mean the graphophone kind. If you have — *the real kind* — I want you to have them play for you the nocturnes of Chopin, so that you can tell me what happens in their twilights. They are the pallid, patient twilights of a northern land, perpetuating themselves in time prodigiously like the six-month polar day which they adjoin. Yet despite their geographical isolation, there is sometimes the fragrance of tropic flowers there, the spreading leaves of equatorial plants of an antique decorativeness, and the flash of fine Moorish blades. Sometimes that vari-tinted constellation called the Southern Cross shines in upon them and the nights have a purple blackness. And occasionally one hears — far off — the swift beat of horses' feet, not horses of the north, but such as carry white-draped Bedouins across the deserts of Arabia. Here you will meet people seemingly ill assorted and strange, but in whom I am interested — and you, too. You will meet — for instance — Turgenev, that blond Greek giant, who wandered — by accident — across the Russian steppe; the de Goncourts, of exquisite taste; and Sainte-Beuve, who found

fault with every one in conversation and was seldom unkind in print. Here is George Sand, meditative and speaking little; Goethe, the god-like, unsympathetic but never unjust. Gautier, declaiming eloquently and declaring that Heine is "Apollo with a touch of Mephistopheles"; Dumas *père*, the titan of mental power, who could write for a day and a night and a day, without sleep; Gerard de Nerval of the witch-like moon-fancies, and, once in a while, Beranger. Here will come de Musset, elegant and eloquent, the adored of a nation. Here one will be subject to the unusual combination of French grace and the sad seriousness of the Slav. Paul Delaroche, lion-headed, will walk gravely through the grey-ness, meditating the next picture he is to paint, the eloquent canvas showing the death scene of Mazarin, the while a crowd of insolent, greedy courtiers are gambling and quarreling in the background, as the agony of death passes over him.

There are prophetic and improbable readings for the future of Poland, and bits of history, both personal and popular, that have not been disseminated. There are things well worth observing here. I have seen the beautiful faces of Polish women lean toward me out of the dimness. You must find out all about these women and tell me what is said and done here, because I am dying of curiosity. This will be a collection of stories



made just for me. And there is one woman in particular who wanders through all these twilights who interests me more than the others. I have met her many times. It is someone Chopin knew when he was young and poor. Life has written eloquently upon her face. I am eager for you to see her and tell me what is written there. Please make these stories for me on stormy afternoons when you are alone and your restless paint brush is idle, and your room is as indistinct with floating cigar smoke as those rich, grey twilights of Poland. But, my dear Unknown, you must not fall in love with that aristocratic woman who wanders in those splendid twilights of Chopin. If you did I should never hear from you again. If you did you would forget your ambition and your facile brush. Napoleon knew something about women. He had seen many races. He said the Polish women are the most dangerous in the world. He confessed that he was afraid of them. You see there is reason for my warning.

Outside the twilight the air is confused and noisy with the throb of revolution, and the voices of an angry multitude are heard coming nearer and nearer. It is the eve of important political events. But here it is quiet, the indestructible, under-the-sea quiet of art. The revolution waits without. It can not enter here.

My tiger on the floor looks disappointed to-day.

He expected to hear your voice over the phone. We are good friends, the tiger and I. He dreams silently all day long of the jungle. And I — I dream silently of those old grey twilights of Poland which you are going to re-people for me.

E.

**I**T IS MONDAY. IT IS MORNING. I am wishing the top of this same morning to you.

I had several conversations with you yesterday. Do you remember any of them? Please do not be so impolite as to tell me that you do not. For one thing I told you that I was going to make my will. You laughed at this because you know I have not wealth to will to any one. I do not think it was nice of you to laugh. Now do you remember? I replied that it did not matter in the least (being poor) that I was going to have the pleasure of making a will just the same.

And all of my friends will be remembered. Although my pocket may be guiltless of gold as a priest's cup of pence, I do not have the consciousness of being poor. I do not believe that gold is the proper substance with which to dissipate poverty. It takes something more divinely nurtured. I feel rich; I feel as if the sun that shone upon the glad pagan cities still shone on me, and my heart is high and triumphant. Since the facts of daily existence are unable to dispel the illusion, it would be futile for you to try. I manage to keep it in face of the disillusioning facts of living. I even pity people who are re-

puted rich because from my point of view they are poor. I have to restrain myself sometimes from offering them an alms because I feel so sorry for them. And the gold that I have, thieves can not break in and steal, nor can moth and rust corrupt. In this way the pleasure of possession is mine unaccompanied with fear. Neither does any one envy me, nor point me out as a miser or a guilty-fingered bond-holder who has robbed his brother men. I shall will to a certain person (whose name I am not going to tell you) the joy I have when I open my eyes in the morning and see the skirt of the day fluted with light. To another, the pleasure I had when I was a child and dipped a shining tin dipper into a sparkling pail of freshly drawn spring-water, and then bent over to drink, seeing the while the blue, laughing mountains swing around and around as if they were dancing a quadrille. This childish act makes me feel akin to the heroes of Homer. To some one else, the sensation I experience when I pour thick yellow cream out of an old buff-colored stone-ware pitcher, a sensation richer in contentment than the coins of Croesus could buy.

To another my interest in pictures, and the collection that hangs upon the walls of my mind. To another my pleasure in promenading my eyes over the surfaces of things that are fine. I have a right to prefer surfaces to souls if I wish.

To some one else who is melancholy and given to the blues, the wish that he may find out that three blades of grass and a yard of blue sky are enough for happiness. To another, the season ticket that lets me in to wander at will across the landscapes the tone-painters have displayed. To another, I shall wish my vision into the hearts of men. This may not be a particularly pleasant bequest, to look down the black and dizzy heights in human hearts.

To another, a memory that comes — a memory of sitting quiet summer after summer, in a lonely farmhouse, in a great bare room, with an old, old lady and a flowering plant, and how they talked together — the old lady and the flower — until they found that they were just two friendly people, who happened to be living upon different planes of life, but near enough so that they could call across to each other. My heart — perhaps — I may leave to you. You might continue to find interest in it. You might know what to do with it. Whenever you opened it to look within it — as one would open one of those delicate caskets of Florentine workmanship — you would find a fresh fancy, a fresh caprice, until after a time, it might remind you of those thin silver strings which the rich and luxurious Romans strung across the windows of their Baïæan villas for the winds from the sea to whisper mysteries upon. Is it so altogether impossible?

In this world of wonders who shall say what may or may not be? An oriental story teller relates this: "One among the lords of Khorasan saw in a vision Sultan Mahmud Sebuktagin, an hundred years after his death, when his body had mouldered into fragments and become dust, except his eyes. These, as ever, moved about in their eye holes and darted their regards." My heart may be like it and continue to possess an independent life of its own. In some way it may have acquired perpetuity.

E.

**A** GORGEOUS WINTER DAY, MY UNKNOWN! The cold snap of the north is in the air. They who were born next door to the Pole, like myself, enjoy the cold. We like to battle against it. We like its exhilaration.

Whenever the wind comes whirling from the north as it does to-day, it recalls that bleak, rugged country where I was born. Winter was splendid there. For days and days the snow fell. It blotted out the earth, the sun. And then winds came that fought and screamed like fiends. I lived in an old farmhouse—in the mountains. We kept fox hounds and hunted. I remember when supper-time came we had to wait until we heard the baying of the hounds, telling that the hunters were on their way back from the hills. Those, red, long-eared fox hounds were my earliest playmates.

And now I do not hunt any more. I can not kill anything—it does not make any difference what it is. I wish every created thing to have its allotted time in the light. And then—how do I know—whom—what—I am killing? Sometimes animals and birds look at me with a look that I seem to remember. If it is true—

that wheel of Buddha — I may be there myself again sometime, struggling to crawl up. It is very confusing — very strange — is it not, this endless journey across the fields of Time?

And, too, it is very funny when souls get put into the wrong bodies. For instance — a sweetly grey elf-soul, with a touch of the tingling laughter of old Ireland, into the body of a man who once thought of becoming a clergyman. Think of that, my dear Unknown! And when he went to make a dutiful and churchly call some fine day, when joy was coursing pleasurably through his veins, his earthly feet might carry him to a door where some one lived who was gay, too, with laughter. Think of that, my dear Unknown! And then a great roaring snow storm came up, and the afternoon was long. Then the snow puts out the sun and the afternoon lasts forever.

There is nothing so unreal as reality.

E.



**T**HIS IS TO WISH YOU A MERRY Christmas, and likewise the good things of the coming year, best of which for you, I suppose, would be a satisfactory finishing of the great picture. In the slow distribution of heavy mail this will just about reach you in time.

I have a queer fancy when this holiday comes. It is something more; it is almost a delusion.

There is a square, white, country-house near an old university town in the north where I went to school, where in fancy I spend it always. It is a large, hospitable house, set in a grove of beech trees, and upon a hill. Every Christmas I find myself going here in a jingling, fur-filled sleigh, across level miles of snow. And the bells are merry, merry. When I reach the house and go within, there are yawning black fireplaces filled with logs, and a host of relatives and friends waiting to greet me. Strangely enough all the people I ever loved are within, smiling and unchanged, even they who have been dead for a decade. And I am not in the least surprised to meet them.

Here I stay for a week, the while a snow storm rages without, and cold wind cries about the eaves. I feel very safe here, secure from evil, and happy.

At Easter I come again. At this season there are jonquils and violets about the base of the hill. And back of it — when the day drops — marvelous yellow sunsets which shine across wet, brown land.

I can not tell by any amount of thinking why this house is so interwoven with my thoughts, unless it is that I like things that do not change. That is why I like old cities that are rich with the memories of generations. Life is warmer, deeper, richer within them. In these old cities, about which hover the atmosphere of centuries of living, perhaps people recover in some degree some of the power of other lives, inherit some of the thoughts, creative impulses of them who have died, and life becomes, not a thing unstable, detached, lonely and cold, but an active part of the richly colored past. It is a fact that the older and more permanent the race, the greater has been its art.

I should like to have lived always in one place. Not that I do not care to travel! I should like to call one place home; some country place by preference, where the fields and the pond and the path through the woods would know me. There I should like to live through quiet spaces of time, with no more disturbing occurrence than a strange plant springing up in the fields or the too early flowering of the orchard. E.

AT THE CONCERT THE OTHER DAY — which was good — I was tortured by the fancy that I am soon to lose the things I care for, the things that make life livable for me. It was the effect of the music I suppose. And when they played Schumann's "*Abendlied*," I suffered.

Suddenly then I saw a dull, grey twilight of north Germany; a twilight sad and damp and lonely, that fell with a wind, in whose voice was the grief of the dead. The wind twined and twined about me like entangling veils. It smothered my mouth. It dimmed my eyes. It grew colder and bleaker. At length it began to snow. Each flake of snow pursued me like a bodiless soul. And then I discovered that each snow-flake that clung to my cheek was a hideous, scornful, white face, whispering to me, whispering to me — things that I did not wish to hear and tried to forget — a face that stung like flame, and that vanished when I tried to whisper back. When I turned quickly to see the face once plainly, the snow-flakes faded back by sad, colorless gradations to monotonous mist. The rest of the programme I did not hear.

This friend of whom you write, must, because of his Chinese name, be related to that King of

Tang who owns the twilight palace by the lake, and who wore jade pendants upon his girdle. I am fond of jade. Do you not think you could get one of those pendants for me? I should prefer one that is the color of old Chinese celadon, with that sweet, soft, soapy surface and engraved with the seal of the God of Laughter. Ask him, too, if he will lend us his palace by the lake. Tell him he can drop in always over Sunday. I think that would please him and make him good natured, do not you? I should not mind at all a little time spent with you in such sweet, gold twilights as engulfed the palaces of Tang.

E.

**V**OICES, MY GOOD UNKNOWN, HAVE color, have they not? I became sure of it by hearing yours over the phone to-day. I know a man whose voice is steel-grey like the thin edge of a scimitar, without a pink tone in it. Yours is rich; red mixed with purple — violets and wine. Throw their warm light over me often!

E.

**Y**OU DO NOT NEED TO COMPLAIN OF weather! Are you not superior to it? With your artist's brush you can shove aside our inclement American winter, and make the grapes grow purple along some Tuscan wall. You can bring back "Autumn in his car of gold," or the blue water by Taormina. The indestructible spring of the Golden Age is yours. It is commonplace people like myself who are subject to wind and weather.

**E.**

**I** HAD A GREAT ADVENTURE YESTER-day! I wandered in the twilights of Chopin. (In Polish they spell it *Sczopan*, I think, do they not?) And whom do you suppose I met, likewise wandering there? The soul of Heinrich Heine. I have known for some years that if I could once be permitted to enter at the right time I should find him. Such friends as he and Chopin could not be separated long. Liszt said that there was such a strong bond of union and sympathy between them that words were a superfluity. All that was necessary was for them to sit in silence together in the same room.

The soul of Heinrich Heine said to me: People never understood the peculiarity and the contradictoriness that arose from my nature and my surroundings. That is why they misjudged and blamed me. I was born, you see, in that ancient dwelling of my ancestors, the grey, stern, granite temple of the Hebrew race. Ah! how in retrospect I can see it now! Its influence has been always upon me. In it there were the monoliths of immemorial kings. It bordered upon the ancient lands of the Orient. It knew, too, the reasonless fanaticism of desert men. Its worn and sunken portals were built in a time so remote that it may not be calculated. The twin stars that rise above the horizon at twilight to

mark the beginning of our holy days, can not remember when they have not looked down upon it. Around its walls were inscribed the laws of Moses and the prophets. Ghostly, white-draped, desert figures lifted their imploring arms for prayer beside its walls. But all the time that I was there with my people whom I loved, I was haunted by a face — a face that they could not understand. Nor indeed should I — who have been called the scorpion-tongued — dare ever to tell them; the face of a childish mother with an infant in her arms. And yet both the mother and the infant were of our ancient race. Every one knows their pictures. Throughout the middle ages they painted them, and they called the pictures "The Madonna." In the eyes of the mother and the infant I saw a sweetness which I understood and which was altogether different to our granite race which taught revenge; an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

*Yet greatly did I love my people.*

Then suddenly I found that I was wandering in a white, Grecian temple, where, between graceful columns of pale porphyry, laughed the sea. Here there was none of the stern bitterness of the old faith. There was nothing but joy. There was nothing but dance and song and laughter. Here Pleasure was king, Pleasure, flower crowned and victorious, and surrounded by beautiful women. Ah! I should have been happy here! That



Greek sentiment for beauty — which did not come from my own race — was satisfied. Here a part of me found its home. The gracious landscape of Greece delighted my eyes — because my eyes were Greek eyes. The faces of the women were flowers fragrant with kisses lifted up for me to enjoy. And the gods who ruled over this land were gods only of pleasure. Only now the infant had grown to be a man, and the eyes of that man were always in my heart. Here, within this glad, Greek temple, that I had longed for so greatly, I grew thin and thin. I grew white and white. No one could find out the reason until one day I happened to discover it myself. My heart was bleeding . . . bleeding the red blood out of me, all the time. And it was because of that man's eyes that were in my heart.

*And yet greatly did I love my people.*

I wandered on and on. At length I entered another temple. This time it was the majestic Temple of the German Intellect. The first step into its portals was taken when I was just a little boy. (I have written a poem about this which you will remember. It is called "*Die Wallfahrt nach Kevlaar*." )<sup>1</sup> I had to forsake my faith to

<sup>1</sup> In the early editions (and I think also in the Cotta Edition of 1885) Heine prints an explanatory note to accompany the poem "*Die Wallfahrt nach Kevlaar*," in which he states that the material of this poem was not altogether his own. In this explanation he outlines part of the story which I have used in this Heinesque fantasy.

enter it. I had to forswear my soul. The rules of the German Temple were inexorable. There was another little boy who entered at the same time. He came and sat beside me. Always when the master was not looking he told me how he had been lame — so very lame that he could not walk. Then his mother took him to Kevlaar and had a waxen foot made just like mine. And this waxen foot she placed by the statue of a man made of marble. And then the little boy's own foot was healed and he could walk. He promised me that some day he would bring me a picture of that marble man. One day he did bring the picture. It was a picture of the man whose eyes had made my heart bleed in that Grecian temple. We separated then, and each went his way for a time in this Temple of the German Intellect. I forgot the little boy. Strange as it may seem, here I all but forgot the eyes that had looked into my heart.

*And yet greatly did I love my people.*

When I became a young man and had climbed up, up, in this German Temple, I met him again. Again we sat side by side just as of old. And again when the master was not looking, he whispered to me that his heart ached and he wished that his good old mother were near, to have a heart made out of wax, and sacrifice it for him. And in this way his own heart would be healed and he would be well again.

Again I lost sight of my little friend. But we were still both going on and on through the Temple of the German Intellect. Years after when we were men grown and I had forgotten all about him, I was walking one afternoon by the shore of the Rhine, when I heard voices singing the song of the pilgrimage to Kevlaar. I looked and saw a band of pilgrims coming. Among them was my boyhood's friend, but so changed now, so ill, so ill — and so white — leaning upon the arm of his poor, old mother. As he passed, he looked up and recognized me. But he was so weak he could not speak. Instead he made a little gesture with one feeble hand which I understood, and which meant: "If I had only sacrificed the heart of wax when I entered that German Temple I should not be dying now."

The art of Aubrey Beardsley was first heard in the music of Chopin, and then read in the quatrains of Heine. Is not Red Sefchen — the executioner's daughter — the proper combination of cruelty and strange beauty, for a pen drawing by Beardsley? I could multiply examples. I like to think that the fancies of Heinrich Heine lived first in the twilights of Chopin.

All things great in art must have had a long descent. They must have flowered humbly, ripened, dropped seed, unseen and unheard, in many different minds before they made their final *début* in the broad daylight of fame.

When Heine was dying he forgot his proud boast that he had never loved but two things; the beauty of women and the French Revolution, and begged a friend to send for the cantor of the neighboring synagogue to come, and to sing for him the songs of his childhood, the hoary, desert songs of Judea. He exclaimed: "Life is too full of suffering to live without faith!" He likewise forgot his political animosities and dictated in his will: "It was the great task of my life to work at a hearty understanding between France and Germany."

And the disease that killed Heine was a disease of genius, peculiar to overstrained and highly wrought temperaments. Like Maurice de Guérin, Keats, Dowson, Jules de Goncourt, Pushkin, Lermontov, Maupassant, Mickiewicz, he had lived too much, enjoyed too much, received and digested within his brain too many ideas, too many impressions. In short, he insisted upon living the life of a god instead of a man. Dull days and dark, commonplace hours were not for him.

The de Goncourt brothers were in Rome when Heine died. When they heard of it Edmond de Goncourt wrote: "Henri Heine is dead, a great personality gone. Better had the vault received all the mourners rather than him they mourned. As far as I can see there are only dwarfs left to bend the bow of Ulysses." E.

**N**OW THE GROUND WHERE I GO golfing is just the color of the tawny back of my tiger on the floor. It is pale and dull, and tinted like the desert sand.

He is glad — my tiger — that my typewriter is repaired so that he can hear me talk to you again. He tells me messages to send to you. He would like to have you come to see us. He insists he thinks it is too bad for me to be so much alone, and to continue to live on throughout the years in places that do not know you. Poor tiger! He only knew life in the jungle.

E.

**W**HO EVER HEARD OF CARING FOR A woman whom one had never seen! It is good that there is something new under the sun. You are shattering the crystallized wisdom of Solomon.

I have begun just where the fateful fable of Narcissus left off. . . . I have faded away to a voice that can not be resurrected into visible life.  
*De hoc sufficit!*

E.

WHAT DO YOU SUPPOSE I HAVE BEEN finding out in studying old Chinese porcelains? Secrets . . . such secrets! Some day — perhaps — I will write them. I shall call the book — probably — “What Happens in China Land.” Do not think it will be an uninteresting book, because it will be about porcelains. Quite the contrary! It will lure you with the lure of romance.

There is a vase of a pale, soft, nameless color belonging to a porcelain called Ting Yao, made centuries and centuries ago, in the black night of forgetfulness. Its outlines resemble the curves of a woman's body; not a Mongolian woman, but a white, Greek woman. The decoration upon it is almost imperceptible, a sort of blind impression made of waving and wonderful lines. No one knows anything about this decoration except myself. I learned it by looking long at the vase, and then following back dim fibers of sensation.

The Chinaman who made it lived by the Yellow Sea where sails go flying like moths' wings in the dusk. Here ships came from strange, far countries to trade. He — an idle artist — lay on the shore and watched them. One day there came a

ship with sails of purple silk, and beneath them a woman whose eyes were the color of the turquoises that they find on the Roof of the World. For days and weeks he loved her, her beauty, with an artist's incomprehensible love. The sight of her set tingling in his brain and his wizard Eastern fingers, the springs of creative fancy. And she, she was happy enough, beneath the purple sails upon the Yellow Sea, and all unconscious of the slanting, black eyes that watched her.

But one night there was trouble. There was a quarrel, and a body flung with passion into the sea. At dawn when the tide came creeping in, the Chinaman lay upon a ledge and watched it. And there, down through its nameless, yellow waters, he saw floating the dead woman of the blue eyes. Death had not marred her yet, nor set upon her its disfiguring color. She was the most beautiful object he had seen.

He went away into the interior of China carrying the memory with him. He became a potter. He made marvelous vases of a contour never seen before in China. Upon their surface he made magic, wavering lines that told of the swaying of tides; and beneath these lines, in a sort of blind impression, there floated something beautiful, mysterious. Was it a flower? Was it some moon-born vision? Something beautiful-born of the sea?



He made the surface of this pottery soft and sweet like the touch of a woman's cheek. And he gave it a voice — timbre — like a sigh of love, which he had heard breathed once — over a sea — at night.

He made this pottery in other colors. One was the blue of the sky after the rain, which was the way her eyes had looked upon the ship one day, humid and sweet with love. And he made it in another color; the green of a thousand autumns upon the hills, which was his way of expressing the Land of Heart's Desire, where in fancy, he had lived with her. And he made it in another color — moon-white — which was the color of her white, dead body floating at dawn within the Yellow Sea. And this was all that he ever knew of love. He did not express it in music or poetry or painting. He made out of it — his love — the most marvelous pottery that the world has seen, and upon its surface in the hieroglyphics of the heart he has told its story.

That is what I am reading now on the vases of Ting Yao.

E.

I FANCIED THAT I PASSED YOU ON the street to-day — you whom I have never seen — and there was a woman walking with you, a beautiful woman.

When we were exactly opposite each other, the woman looked up and observed me. Then she turned to you and inquired, "Why are that woman's thoughts so far away?"

Swift as a swallow's wings your eyes swept my face. You replied: "I think she is building a dream-home for some one she loves very dearly . . . *in a far country.*"

Then she looked up into your eyes in the pagan sunlight, and I heard her laugh. "What is that?" she replied indifferently.

You answered: "It is an ideal place of the spirit — which only few can find."

E.

**I SAW YOUR SOUL THURSDAY. IT** slipped out between the lines of your letter. It is silver colored and grey. And it would be merry if its owner were not such a stern taskmaster and so ambitious.

Your soul said to me:

"You understand! No one should be forced to work all the time. There are other things worth considering besides duty and work."

I will tell you other things that your soul said to me some day when I have time and opportunity.

"I was the most mischievous of elves once," your soul declared rather regretfully. "And then, not thinking for the moment what I did, just for fun, I slipped into a priest's body and there got shut in. Imagine if you can what that was like for an elf like me! He clothed me in the ugliest and gloomiest of clothes. He never permitted me to dance or sing or follow my own will. He did not permit me to love pleasure or light or laughter. For hours I kneeled on cold, stone floors and repeated prayers which I did not comprehend. Then for days I practically went without eating. For other days I slept only a few hours. In fact I did everything that was dis-

agreeable and unsuited to me, and I never did anything that was suited to me. My constant companions were the things that I abhorred. After a while I found that I could stand it no longer so I played a shabby trick on the priest — a very *bad trick* — and escaped. The priest died. I suppose I was the cause of it. But it was not really murder; it was merely a defensive act of personal necessity. For some time after that I was unable to feel the old elfin joy that was my inheritance.

“Next I got shut up in the body of a penniless, dreaming poet. This life was not so bad, and in some ways it suited me. I really had a pretty good time there. Poets, of course, do not have anything to eat, but I had received good lessons in fasting in the priest’s body so I stood it better. Poets are like orchids and live on air. *Carmina non dant panem*. The work the poet did, too, I could appreciate. Poetry is only a fillip of nothing stirred by a fallen god. And the country of the poet I loved. It was a rich and varied wonderland. It would take a mad botanist to describe to you the things that grew there — all pleasant enough to look upon, but nothing useful. Folly grew there better than anything else, I should say. I was fairly happy in the poet’s body, because a poet and an elf are alike in this — that they are never taken seriously.

“Next I got shut up in the body of an effete,

Italian aristocrat, a sensualist. That was a life that disturbed and agitated me. It was like living in a forest where the wind roars continually. I was not happy at all there. You see an elf cares only to touch with his lips lightly the cup of love, never to drink deeply. I should have enjoyed life more in the body of a beauty lover, who always searched for love but could not find it, because he found out in the end that he was an artist and not a lover. It is a most important thing for a soul to find the right body! All these different bodies, you see, have left their marks upon me," confided your soul to me. "And that is where the confusion comes in."

The reason he talks so freely to me — your soul — is because he remembers the day when I mocked the great god Pan, and for punishment was turned into a woman. And he has been following me ever since to tell me the secret by means of which I can get turned back. I am impatient for that time to come. From what a world of worry and annoyance it would free me! From how many grown-up, incomprehensible duties for which I have neither respect nor ability! I hope it will be before I grow older.

He would like to run away with me — your soul. If he did we would at once become gay elves again, white, wing-fluttering, riotous elves. One of the first places to which we would go (You will call it foolish! You will laugh!) will

be a pale, upland pasture by night, where the grass is pale by day, and under the moon, it is disconcerting silver. We would go to an upland pasture filled with ghostly mullein stalks, whose tall flowers are magic yellow disks filled with dew. And here your soul and I . . . Ah! but I dare not tell you! And we would have nights under mimic primrose moons! Please do not scold your soul if he should come in late sometime soon, because he will be under the primrose moons, — with me. If you should scold him he might set off vagabonding again — and hide in a priest's body — and then there is no sort of telling when you could find him. And you must not try to make him tell you anything that happens in the Land of the Primrose Moons.

You can not imagine, my good Unknown, how joy flowers in that magic land! It flowers like those white-winged Cupid-chains which Boucher loved to paint in that luxurious city by the Seine, and which Watteau wreathed about the masts of the ships which carried travelers to the Isle of Venus. When the spring wind blows, your soul longs for the primrose moons — and me. Under those mimic moons our wishes float visibly near us, like blown cigarette smoke, turning and twining until they change into the blue riband love-knots and the fadeless roses of Versailles.

I will describe for you sometime the adven-

tures of your soul. And then I will explain what happened to your body when your soul ran away. It left you in a more pitiable condition than that of Peter Schlemihl, who lost only his shadow. In the meantime I advise you to be very good! When your soul is gone you can not find The Primrose Land — and me. I should not mind at all meeting you there at dusk, when some old lost planet of pleasure swings near enough to the earth again to throw its intoxicating, rosy light over us.

E.

# **UPON THE PLAINS**





**S**PRING IS HERE! I CAME TO MEET IT.  
And I was just in time. I found it had been waiting for me.

And my prairie garden! I wish you could see it. You reply coldly that you never heard of a garden upon the prairie and that the age of miracles has passed. You tell me that in your childhood's geography Kansas was represented by a sand-colored oblong dotted with black dots across which was printed "The Great American Desert."

I agree with all that. But in an older and a wiser book it had been promised that the desert shall bloom like the rose. Come and see for yourself what has happened! Kansas has fields of yellow grain and its harvests help feed the world.

I know of course that a garden should belong to an aristocrat of wealth and leisure. What could it have in common with an humble prairie dweller like myself! One recalls too readily other gardens . . . the gardens of San Marco, where Lorenzo the Magnificent established a school, whence came such geniuses as Angelo and Donatello; and those gayer gardens designed for Lorenzo's own personal pleasure in the grounds of Careggi. I recall the Borghese gardens, and

the nightingales, and that Babylonian wonder, which was planned by a king to console his homesick queen for the flowers and the fountains of Medea. There were the gardens of Bachtsai Serai where the Tartar Khan kept his beautiful prisoners; Pushkin has pictured them, and Lermontov, and Mickiewicz. Some of the important moments of the world have had their beginning in gardens. From an old garden of Greece came a philosophy that has almost equalled Christianity in consoling man for the wounds of life — and its briefness. It was in a garden of India, amid the roses of the East, that man first learned to find wisdom in meditation. It was in such a place that Sheik Sa'adi, after a lifetime of wandering — through Arabia, India, Egypt — sat down at last to rest and think, and to write the *Gulistan*, explaining as he did so: "From an hundred gardens I gathered the rose-blooms."

In the golden days of Rome it was where Augustan men of fashion, like Horace and Catullus, chose to entertain their friends. There was no place they considered so distinguished and so pleasure-giving. Ovid, in exile, longed sadly for those old, gay gardens of Rome, from which indiscreet love for a woman of the Cæsar's family had banished him forever. It was in the gardens of Versailles that great ladies and gentlemen met to talk and jest, and to play elegantly with word

and phrase, until they made of their language the most perfect instrument in existence for conversation. And the sound of that language to-day; *Monsieur, mademoiselle*, can you not see in the words the gallant bow of a courtier? Courtesy can not fade from the world as long as the French tongue lasts.

To these same gardens of France came in a later day such artists as La Touche, Ciardi, Rusiñol and Le Sidaner, and poets like Merrill and Jammes, to gather some of the superabundant glory of the past. In bleak and rainy Scotland, the Scotland of the stern Dissenters' faith, it was the luxurious gardens of France that Mary Stuart regretted most. Even Voltaire, that scorner of things sacred and bitter wit, who spent his life as the ornament of a drawing room, makes his *Candide* say: "The best thing we can do is to cultivate a garden."

Lord Bolingbroke, despoiled of titles and honors and in disgrace, consoled himself by making a garden. He wrote about it to Swift: "I am in my own farm. Here I shoot strong, tenacious roots. I have caught hold of the earth, to use a gardener's phrase, and neither my enemies nor my friends will find it an easy matter to transplant me again." Gay, the poet, so Taine declares, was merely "a gardener at heart, delighted to see the spring arrive, happy to be able to enclose an extra field in his garden."

Ulysses visited a quite remarkable one. I can not recall another like it. (Seventh Book of the Odyssey.) Trees grew there whose fruit never perished winter or summer. There a warm west wind blew continually, opening fresh buds and ripening fruit. The house set in this garden was not unworthy attention. The walls were noble. The door posts, the pillars and the threshold were silver, while the doors themselves were of gold.

The Japanese insist that the word *beauty* belongs so thoroughly to the gardens of their islands that we have no right to use the word until we have visited them.

Of course my garden is like none of these. It is just a small space of ground upon the prairie. But now blue grass grows here, and some old-fashioned flowers, which memory makes pleasant to me. Maples of fair size surround it, and occasionally birds come.

Should you see my unpretentious frame dwelling, by the side of the sandy road, you would naturally wonder that I take pleasure in it. But the windows of my dwelling do not look upon the lonely prairie, as you may imagine, but upon the populous universe. From the windows of this dwelling I can watch the procession of the ages pass me like a pageant. If you should call upon me I could not show you, to be sure, a stately mediaeval garden of old France, like that where

Ronsard dwelled. I could not point out to you a French chateau like that of Perigord, where Montaigne wrote his cynicisms. I could only show you a little square of grass beneath the maples, where I idle away the days, and where in my own peculiar manner, I pursue that phantom that men call happiness.

E.

**T**HERE IS ONE RAGGED ARISTOCRAT in my garden, — a Spanish dagger (the yucca plant). She ran away on the wild winds of spring from the rainless, cacti-dotted deserts. The plant has a tower of white, or better, ivory-hued lilies, as high as my head, surrounded by black-green leaves so stiff and glittering they resemble rows of swords. And the lily bells — though lovely — are strong and of tough tissue that no stress of sun and wind can destroy. Northern lilies that are tall and lovely have soft flexible leaves of a moist and pleasant green, and a blossom cup of fragile satin.

My Spanish aristocrat stands alone in the center of the garden, haughty and domineering. I believe in social equality even among flowers, and I would dispense with her gladly if I could. She does not permit me to approach, nor to enter her charmed circle because her black sword points are sharp and obtrusive. She lacks sensitiveness and kindness. She lacks approachableness and flexibility. In addition, the atmosphere spread abroad by my pseudo Spanish aristocrat is tragic and out of the emotional range of my gossipy little flowers. She recalls sun-baked deserts

where men die of thirst; rainbow-tinted cliffs, and the frozen forest of stone. My friendly little flowers do not like her any better than I do. They are afraid of her. She is haughty, high of head, and frigidly correct. She does not even permit a frolicsome, impertinent weed to come near. An empty space of sand encircles her. I haven't a flower that would dare encroach for a brief call.

She is deservedly unpopular in the garden. Never for a second does she relax in dignity. The flowers do not like to chat and gossip when she is within hearing. They feel that she looks down upon them with scorn. Sometimes in April or May, that old roué, the South Wind, who has deceived generations of flowers, puts on his most smiling manner and offers to play for a party. The little foolish flowers lose their heads and hearts at sight of him. They bow and smile and swing their petticoats. But the Spanish aristocrat will have nothing to do with him. She will not even incline her head. Throughout the dance she ignores him. She even pretends that she does not hear the fluting of the South Wind. This makes some of the flowers angry and they turn their backs on her. Of course it would be better for every one concerned, if she would make believe — once in a while — that she enjoyed the music of the South Wind, when the other flowers enjoy it so much. He is the most popular musi-



cian we have here in April. He has taught charming dance-steps to the prairie flowers. Under his tutelage the Sensitive Rose has become a veritable ballet queen.

Yesterday when the snub-nosed pansies and those bold, buxom beauties, the hollyhocks, spoke to her, she refused to answer. This caused such a feeling of anger and dissension, that the flowers insist that I reprimand her. So to-night, on one of the sharp, dagger points that guard her — after the manner of a French troubadour of old — I am going to fasten this message:

*Swing a little, dance a little,  
 White Lily,  
 Summer's here, be not so frigid,  
 Nor queenly,  
 Deign to bend upon the grasses  
 Thy white face,  
 Send not all thy sweetness skyward,  
 Into space,  
 Let thy sister flowers see once,  
 Thy heart's gold,  
 Lady Lily, do thou hasten!  
 Suns grow old.*

E.

**I** AM SENDING YOU A STORY OF SPRING to-day, just the kind of a story that should come from a garden. When you look up at the stars at this season of the year you will remember it — and then perhaps you will think of me who procured for you some of the joys of the mind.

In India the Holy there is an ancient book which is called the Mahâbhârata. Indeed so sacred is this book that it is kept among the gods in the two heavens which are directly above, and only a few numbers have been entrusted to the hands of men. No one can tell how many of these books are upon the earth, nor how long they will be permitted to remain here.

Within the Mahâbhârata there are other books, and books within books. In the beginning of that one which is known as "The Third Part" is another which is called "The Book of the Forest." Now this in itself is a remarkable book, because it was written neither by the hands nor by the thoughts of men. It was written by the leaves of the forest. It is the heart-story, the dear memory, the pleasant diary of the leaves of the Indian trees. It is the record of what they whispered to each other in the silence of blazing noon-tides, when not even the serpent dare slip

abroad. It is the record of what they whispered softly under the prodigious splendor of Indian moons and stars, and the velvet, purple mid-nights of the East.

Just above, but quite near this earth upon which we live, there is a little unnamed star, which we can not see plainly, because our eyes are not made to look upon the dwellings of immortals. Upon this star the great gods dwell, Siva, and Vishnu . . . . The star moves about anywhere through space at the command of their wishes, just as trees bend at will of the wind. By the edge of this star as it speeds along the sapphire roadways of the sky, the great gods recline at ease, like a luxurious lady by the windows of her limousine.

Sometimes God Vishnu commands: "To the Milky Way!" Then they go sailing around those level islands that are made of silver, scentless flowers. Or God Ganesa calls: "To the Great Bear!" And it is there they go. They pull his tail to make him wink his eyes, and then the gods laugh, and are happy. Or sometimes they sail between the shining claws of Scorpio, or away to bathe in the pink light of Venus, or to count the moons of Saturn. This is the way they amuse themselves — the great gods.

But there is one night in spring when things are different and the moon does not shine. Then there is an especial festival upon this star. It is

the night God Siva dances. Now the hairs of the head of Siva are each a long black serpent. First he gets up slowly from his reclining position by the edge of the sapphire roads and stretches his long arms lazily, and his legs, which are weary with sitting. Then one by one he plucks the serpents of his hair and stands each serpent erect on his tail upon the ground. Upon his head which is now bare, he places the sickle of the young moon, which gives little light. When this is done God Siva and the army of black snakes begin to dance. First, slowly, slowly. The serpents sway like a blackened field of grain, which the lightning has blasted. Then faster, faster they dance, taking up more and more room on the tiny star, until there is almost no place for the other gods. They are obliged to cling to the sides for fear they will fall off. The faster he moves the more difficult does the dancing become for God Siva. Because if he is not careful, and does not step lightly, his feet will crush the star to dust, and then no longer would the gods have a home. Then there would be nothing but an abyss. And he must be careful about swinging his arms, or he will put out the candles of the stars, and the sun, too, which is on the other side of the earth. And then there would be darkness. And he must be careful where he looks lest the light of his eyes set worlds on fire — the worlds of gods and the worlds of men.

The other gods are angry, and the God of War turns loose his glittering, eye-dotted peacocks of the orange-circled throats, which are enemies of serpents. Across the star of the dancing snakes they march in battle array, with outspread tails, and erect, angry, splendid crests. With them Indra sends his echoing thunder which the peacocks love, and which strengthens their hearts and inspirits them. When the dancing serpents hear the thunder and see the peacock battle-host coming nearer, they fall limply to the ground and writhe and twist with fear. Then Siva stops the dance. He bends and whispers to them. At his word they turn and slip away toward the God Ganesa, who has the head of an elephant. They crawl up his legs. They cover them. They swing like black silken ribbons from his huge ears where they hide, and the peacocks can not find them to destroy them.

Then the face of the elephant-headed Ganesa begins to be covered with a sweet and yellow honey, and suddenly the entire expanse of the star is blotted and blurred beneath a swarm of golden bees. The Dance-God, Siva, drops wearily upon his couch and takes down from his brow the young moon which he reaches out to hang upon the sky. The gods see that this is the first, yellow, languorous moon of Spring. The hoarse-throated peacocks begin to call, just as they do on days of the early year, for the rain to come.

The thunder echoes louder. The golden bees are frightened, and they leave the face of God Ganesa, and the dripping honey, and fall down the night.

They fall on and on through dense, black leagues of space, until they reach the Earth. We have seen them on windy nights of Spring and called them falling stars. Now when I see them I think something different and I say: "God Siva is weary with dancing and has lain down to rest by the sapphire roads."

When the gold bees reach the Earth, they run to the trees and the flowers. They run across the level fields. They whisper: "*Awake! Awake! . . . the Spring is here!*"

The white water-lily opens her eyes. The jasmine unfolds. The Kokila — which is the Indian nightingale — begins to sing. The pink lotus on the blue water spreads open; out of it steps Lakschmi, the Goddess of Love, — and the Indian Spring is born.

E.

**I** HAVE VISITS FROM QUITE A NUMBER of birds. And there are not many trees in this part of the state to provide housing for them. There are slender, graceful, grey-feathered scissor-tails, and catbirds. The last are particularly talkative. They chatter like monkeys from morning till night. Redbirds, which are vicious of temper, wild canaries, orioles, blue jays, black-birds, robins, swallows, sparrows, and occasionally martins and mocking birds.

The blue jay, which in the north likes to live deep within the forest, is less solitude-loving here. He is sociable and enjoys people, and really seems to take an interest in what they say. He not only insists upon being in town, but upon building his nest just as near to the houses as possible. There are eight or ten in my maples some summers. If you touch their nests or young, they will fly at you and attack you, just as fearlessly as if you were a bird enemy. The redbird is bad tempered, too. His one little phrase of song reminds me of a unique decoration drawn by a Japanese painter. In the early days when there were not so many houses the mocking bird was a daily visitor. He was so talkative he made

up for lack of people. I do not see them often now.

To-night in my maple-shaded yard the fire-flies are abroad. They dot the darkness under the trees. Soon before me will spread that promised land which La Touche always felt a desire to paint. I shall see white feet scampering away into shelter and shadowed grace of forms. I, too, have a liking for the things that are superior to reality. I like to disdain the dominance of fact.

While I sit here quietly in the darkness listening, I think that it is good to have lived, even without wealth and power and the glitter of things that men call great, because always there will be night and stars and sleep, and the splendor of white day.

E.



WE HAD A STORM LAST NIGHT — A tragic and triumphant one. Black billows were piled to the dome of the sky until they looked like the wall of a world. They were edged with an angry, defiant bronze color. Silence spread over the prairie and a threatening light. This light brought the strangest colors to my garden. It was really for a moment as if I had never seen it before.

Then with a rush and a roar the wind swept down. It blurred mile-long levels with indistinguishable dust. Rain followed. It was bright and cold as ice. It swept the grey, prairie grass into a white flight of fear. It cut splendid, long, white, slanting lines across the sky. It was full of joy and fury and abandon. It leaped cold and white as an ecstatic dancer on to the plain. It both terrified and gladdened my garden. Nig, my black cat, enjoyed it and watched it with green, shining eyes.

As I finish this letter, writing out of doors in the grape arbor, I recall — more or less appropriately — the last words of a letter of Horace, written from his Sabine farm to an absent friend in Rome: "These words I dictate to thee behind the mouldering temple of Vacuna, happy in all things, save that thou wast not with me." E.

**A** TRIP ACROSS THE PLAINS OF KANSAS on the train is not altogether uninteresting. It would not be even to you who have been everywhere and seen everything. Difference might serve as interest. This great, mid-continent monotony is paintable, too.

There are flat-topped hills, uniform in size, all pointing southwestward, toward the greater deserts beyond. Kansas must have been the bed of an ocean. Deposits in the limestone prove it, and the natural configurations, which make you feel that you are performing the feat of riding across the bottom of a dried-up ocean, as nameless and forgotten as those that yawn blackly toward you from the caverns of the moon. Instead of fields of grain, once leagues of water swayed here. And I have seen these grain fields ripple like the tides. Indeed the land undulates like frozen waves.

I like these vast, lonely levels where the eye is unimpeded and where hindrances are not so visible. It will breed a race — some day — skilful in overcoming obstacles, and devoted to the freedom of the human spirit.

E.

**T**HE SKY WAS SO BLUE TO-DAY THAT we decided to take a journey together, you and I. I said: "Where shall we go?"

You replied: "To find something as blue as the sky."

I agreed cheerfully. We started. We climbed up, up the winding, perilous mountain road that leads from the Persian Gulf to the high land of the interior. There we crossed a valley set on the top of a mountain, until we approached another valley and an earth-walled city named Shiraz. It was spring. The little city was buried in roses, the fabulous pink roses of Persia.

In order to make sure of entering the city safely and without opposition, you suggest that we stop outside the walls at a caravansary and buy clothing in order to dress as do the people who dwell there. I agree with your plan. It seems good. Soon you have on a long, flowing garment tightly wrapped about you, and a towering, black, high-tilted bonnet. I have on loose, silken trousers, a black veil that covers me from head to foot, and a little white mask over my nose. Thus arrayed we set out for the city. You admonish me scornfully: "You must not forget

your promise, which was to show me something that is as blue as the sky!"

I reply: "Follow me! You shall not be disappointed."

I walk swiftly ahead, turning and turning around corners; in the walled, twisting streets of Shiraz. There are other black phantoms in this street.

You can not tell readily which is I. You are looking so busily to find out that you do not see the city at all. I slip up to you and whisper in your ear: "Look there!"

I point with my finger. There, down a crooked street, is a mammoth mosque made out of a single turquoise, beside the austere, ashen mountain summits of Persia. Without and within it is covered with a wonderful enamel as deeply rich and as even in tone as a gem.

I enter. You follow me. As far as one can see across its smooth, mosaic, level floor there are black phantoms, like myself, kneeling in prayer. You hasten to join the kneeling phantoms and you lose me. When, their prayers being ended, they begin slowly to go away, you join the moving crowd and try to find me. You walk about in the attempt to see one who in some way suggests me. I see where you are and I elude you and elude you. At last the phantoms are gone — all but one. You know that that one must be I. You start toward me and attempt to reach me, but I float away and away from you,

under the farthest edge of the jeweled dome. Still you follow. Still I elude you. At length, just as you are about to reach me, the sonorous voice of a muezzin calls the prayer of noon: *Allah il allah! Mahmoud rasul allah.*

Then you catch me. You throw back my long, black veil. But the veil floats from under your hands and falls limply upon the mosaic floor at your feet. Beneath it you find nothing tangible, nothing but a pleasure-made creation of your mind. And the phantom whispers: "There is another god beside Allah, and the name of that god is joy." You rush with me out of the mosque and away. You say that you can not endure longer the melancholy, confining walls of the ancient city. Once outside, where the fresh wind comes nimbly and unimpeded from the mountains, and the vision of the eye is unhindered, you find me again, merry, dressed just as of old. At once I say to you: "Look there! The ruins of some ancient palace!"

You follow with your eyes my pointing fingers across the field of nodding poppies, and see them too. You say we must visit the ruins and inform ourselves about them. You signal to a man passing with saddled mules. We mount eagerly in happy anticipation, and a guide leads the way to the palace of the tall, slender columns.

It is a long ride across the field of white poppies. With the unaided eye one can not estimate dis-

tances in this shining air of the summits, under this unflecked sky. When we reach the ruins of the palace and you have examined them for a while, you exclaim: "Surely, this was Persepolis!"

I catch my breath with surprise and ecstasy. I had not thought such a thing could be possible. Persepolis! Then Thais once stood here and looked up at these same gaunt mountains!

Hastily I dismount and join you. Together we climb the steps, as hugely outspread as the terraced side of a mountain, and stand upon the noble platform of the ancient palace. Here we search among the ruins as if at some unheard command. At length I find a little marble box that had once been rimmed with metal, which the flames could not destroy on that fateful night when one of the wonders of creation was burned. We succeed at length in opening it together, you and I. Within there is a tiny piece of white stone upon which is chiseled the features of Thais, and love letters written upon wrinkled papyrus — love letters written by a Greek sculptor to Thais. Ah! — such letters . . . such letters! This sculptor, we learn, was the friend of Menander, the poet. It was from him that he learned to write with grace.

You are lost in meditation. You forget your admiration for the noble ruin upon which we stand. At length you turn to me with the startling question:

“Do you suppose we have found the reason that made her drive Alexander the Conqueror to burn this Persian palace?” Of course! At last the secret is out. She was homesick for Greece — for the caresses of that artist lover. (I am going to send to you in translation soon the letters of this Greek sculptor.)

You see, my good Unknown, if she had not been real, but only a phantom of pleasure, this destruction would not have taken place. It is better you must admit that they should remain invisible, or wear black veils always over the face.

E.

**T**HE RED ROSES ARE IN BLOOM! I leaned out of my window at sunrise and saw them. They are tall and dark and haughty. They are flushed with pride. They are clad in royal satin. They are of a triumphant, glorious red. In their imperious color I can learn to understand the passions that inspired prodigious crimes.

A red like this burned upon the face of perilous Circe. A red like this walled and draped the chamber where Borgia, of the great, gold hair, meditated poisons that were imperious and subtle. And some are just the hue of the wine-red tourmalines of California.

My roses are lovelier this morning than those fabulous roses of Carthage which were "so lusciously yellow and red."

E.

882577



I WISH YOU COULD SEE MY GARDEN at night under the prairie moon. The moon is lovelier here than in your pale, northern city. It is larger and yellower, and leans in a more friendly manner toward the earth. As I sit here watching it rise — far away in the depths of a bright serenity — I recall the petulant complaint of Leopardi (suggested by your letter, asking me to tell you what I know of him) that human grief can not dim its brightness. In complying with your request I am giving, more or less verbatim, a sort of running commentary from what the critics of his country have written about him. (No, he would not be suitable for your first reading of Italian. He is *un peu difficile*, and of a manner too coldly chiseled. Find a writer of an easier, more every-day speech.)

The self in Leopardi was so strong, so insistent, that no matter what his surroundings, he could not resist making the personal application. Not in any work of the mind — great scholar that he was — not even in the presence of those antique marbles he loved and understood, could he forget himself and be happy. His was the exact opposite of the cultivated mind of the Orient.

He had not learned with Faust, that the way to find oneself, is first to lose oneself.

All things that were enduring and eternal, and more than all, nature, with her power of continual rejuvenescence, was a reproach to him who must suffer, and grow old and die. It was this selfness that ate his health up and threw a gloom over his mind. It was this that made him hate the day, and his fellow men. It was this that made him the poet of night, and waste places, and the lonely moon. He had a feeling of sympathy for whatever was deserted as he thought that he himself was. The sky fascinated him, because of its remoteness from life. There was nothing about it to suggest a memory of man whom he hated. He loved it. But he was an exile from the daylight world of normal living. He was a pessimist. His bitter wit and his pessimism he did not enjoy, as did Heine, La Rochefoucauld, and Voltaire.

I can not blame him for this mental disease. People need happiness just as my garden flowers need sun. Leopardi happened to dwell where the sunshine fell but seldom. For that reason he lacked sweetness. The soul of him dwelled in a grey desert where there were neither trees nor flowers. He never knew the sun. He had that "mental unsoundness" which Macaulay believed was necessary to the creating or the perfect comprehending of poetry. With Macaulay

he believed the modern world would be less and less able to write it. His mind was like the desolate greyness of dawn before the sun has risen. All his terms of love and endearment were expended upon the moon and the night—the things that seemed to belong least to life, and to man. You can not find a lovelier poem anywhere than his “Hymn of an Asiatic Shepherd to the Moon.”

Another cause of misery was his consuming fear of death. The thought of it held his mind with a relentless fascination, just as it held captive the minds of Poe, Hoffman, Gautier, and Baudelaire, Schopenhauer and Lenau. His earliest verses bear witness to this. In addition, Leopardi’s consciousness of the ephemeral nature of all conditions of living, paralyzed his ambition, and took away his happiness. His mind realized infinitude and vastness, and the littleness of the human animal. He saw the fact of death in all its terror of isolation, and friendship and love never enabled him to soften the view. He could not make any plan for life that would harmonize with the fact that he must die. The tragic fate of man was always in his mind.

This attitude of thought impelled him to seek in literature the calmness of antique life, and it is one of the foundations for the building up of his Greek scholarship. He loved the calm, white figures that peopled the Hellenic world, because

they were so far away from the modern world he hated. He was so sensitive, so delicately tempered, that he had no interest in the ordinary affairs and amusements of life. He longed continually for a beauty that has passed away from the world. Only the most ideal and sheltered living could have made him happy. His untiring study, his cultivation of the senses, made him able to appreciate in literature, as did Winklemann in plastic art, the work of the Greeks. In forming a literary style he acquired so perfectly Greek standards that he was not in sympathy with the Italians of his day. His constant prayer was: "*La favilla antica rendi allo spirito mio.*"

It is difficult to imagine such mental isolation. The life of Leopardi is the saddest I know. It illustrates at its bitterest the tragedy of loneliness. He could have said with Cleon: "Methinks I am the sadder for these many weary years I bowed my back which taught me art."

Intellectually he has been compared with Balzac's hero in "*Peau de Chagrin.*" The Italian critic who made this comparison writes: "In the pride of his youth, with the finest scholarly equipment of any man in Europe (When he was twenty Niebuhr said he could teach him nothing in classical philology) he dared not enjoy, dared not work, dared not permit his sensitive nerves the vibrations of pleasure which he knew would not only shorten his days but deprive him of

sight. He found it necessary to live as one dead." His countrymen have declared that in imitation of the Human Comedy, Leopardi should have written a Human Tragedy, because — better than any one else — he saw the horrors of men's souls. What an Oxford scholar wrote of the youth of Schopenhauer is true of Leopardi: "The lad had evidently the uncanny, Hamlet-like gift of penetrating beneath the calm and smiling surface of life. He can not help seeing the skeleton that is grinning horribly in the closet. His is a kind of second sight. . . . The illusion, which envelopes the living so that they pass unseeing, lightly over the crevasses of life, and over its dreary wastes, is already pierced for him, by sudden glimpses of insight into the mystery of the unseen."

He was the mental giant of Italy. He towered above his countrymen in lonely grandeur. He had no feeling of kinship with them. He scorned their pleasures. He disdained their standards. He cared nothing for the beauty of women. He did not care for painting nor for splendidly colored objects. His ideal of beauty was the Greek ideal, the muscled bodies of men, bared for the games. (See "*Un Vincitore nel Pallone*.")

In the realm of poetry he attained absolute perfection of form. His poems are like the marbles he loved, clear cut and hard. There is no color. His art is of line and weight. The

poems he has left are as flawless as Attic marbles. They are the naked thought stripped of adornment. It is worth the effort of learning the Italian tongue to read once such wordcraft. No other modern has so approached the classic manner. He reduced thought to its purest form. No one else has practiced concentration and elimination so relentlessly.

He loved Italy and the Italian language. His scholarly knowledge has made richer the Italian tongue. It was a grief that ill health permitted him to do so little for the country that he loved. Writing to his friend and patron Giordano, he says: "There are so many things to be done in Italy now that it grieves me that I am so straitened and chained by evil fortune that I can do nothing. . . . There is the lyric to create (almost the entire nation, and the French in particular, call the ode the sonata of literature) and many kinds of tragedy, since Alfieri only gave us one. . . . In short the whole race to be run, and I, who received from nature sufficient ability to reach the goal, am held back in the prison of ill fortune, and deprived of even the hope of showing Italy something of which she neither knows nor dreams."

The names of his poems are indicative of a peculiar mental detachment. We miss the happy exhilaration of a poet and the kindly, intimate memory of little things. "*La Ginestra*" (the

flower of the desert), the lonely broom-plant that grows upon the slopes of Vesuvius; "The Night Song of an Asiatic Shepherd"; (This is a pagan hymn to the moon.) "The Solitary Sparrow"; "*Appressamento della Morte*"; "*L'Epistola A Carlo Pepoli*" (The soul-struggle of a man tortured — like himself — by thought of death.) "*Amore e Morte*"; "*L'Infinito*"; "*Vita Solitaria*." "*Le Ricordanze*" pictures his lonely childhood. It was written on his last visit home and it is a farewell to youth and to life. He tells us how night after night he sat alone watching for the coming of his beloved moon, and dreaming of the time when he would be permitted to cross the Apennines.

*Che dolci sogni mi spiro la vista  
Di quel lontano mar, quei monti azzurri,  
Che di qua scopro, e che varcare un giorno  
Io mi pensava, arcani mondi, arcana  
Felicita fingendo al viver mio!*

(What sweet dreams the sight of that far sea inspired in me, and the azure mountains which I could glimpse from here and which I longed to cross, picturing to myself mysterious happiness beyond.)

The day came when he did cross the mountains. But he did not find anything beyond that he wanted. Pitiful is his wandering from city to city in search of a momentary respite from pain.

Life in the splendid cities of Italy brought his frail body nothing but misery, and he was glad to turn back at last toward Recanati, where they called him *il gobbo di Leopardi* (Leopardi the hunchback).

In almost every poem that he has written there is evidence of his love for the moon. Beautiful are these terms of endearment: *silenziiosa luna*, *vergina luna*, *intatta luna*, *candida luna*. It was fitting that his noblest poem — "The Song of the Asiatic Shepherd" — and likewise that the last one that he wrote, "The Setting of the Moon," should be addressed to the moon which he had always loved.

Leopardi came at length to believe that there is nothing worth while. In the labyrinths of his gloomy thinking he lost the incentive to live. As he grew older the fear of death assumed the proportion of a mania. It became a "fixed idea." His physical suffering and his mental terrors made him long to have it over with. The saddest letter in literature is the one he wrote to his father from his cottage on the slopes of Vesuvius shortly before he died.

NAPLES, May 27, 1837

My dearest Father: . . . If I escape the cholera and my health permits I shall make every possible effort to see you before long. I am in haste because I am persuaded by



occurrences which I have foreseen for a long time, that the end prescribed by God to my life is not far off.

My daily suffering has become so great that it can go no further. I hope that when at last the frail resistance of this wretched body shall be overcome, I shall be permitted to enjoy eternal rest, not because of personal bravery but because of the greatness of my suffering. . . . I hope that after I have seen you all again that a speedy death will put an end to my misery which can not be helped in any other way.

*Your loving son,*  
GIACOMO

Upon the fourteenth of the following month the death he prayed for came to him.

This letter was written by the greatest classical scholar in Europe and one of the world's perfect poets.

E.

WITH WHAT DISGUST AND DISAP-  
probation would my neighbors look at me, as I  
am sitting here idly in my garden, if they knew  
that I was dreaming of the face of a pagan woman  
to whom virtue was a thing unessential.

I become weary of the stories which fiction  
writers try so hard to unfold for me, and I long  
for the hidden stories that no one has told,  
stories that are hinted at but never displayed,  
intimate stories not spoiled by the prying fingers  
of the world. I have a desire just now to know  
which one of the women mentioned in the pages  
of Horace was the one he loved. Their names  
are pleasant and I like to repeat them; Barine,  
Lalage, Lyce, Pyrrha, Neara, Cinara. I like to  
think of their faces, the crocus and violet gowns  
they wore, their Syrian and Indian perfumes.  
Who were they? What was their life? Were  
they of noble birth or did they belong to the  
people? What did they look like? What was  
the special charm of each? What were their  
amusements? What did they do during the  
long, unmarked Roman day? All that is left of  
them now is a name upon the verse of this so-  
ciety poet of Augustus. And these names may

have been fictitious, chosen to conceal the amours of great ladies of Rome.

I have turned over pages of prints and engravings, and wandered through art galleries looking at faces of pictured women to find some visible ideal for these antique beauties. I do not see why Tadema or Coomans could not have placed them among their marbles instead of those flat-footed English women with their dull English eyes.

Horace is not distinguished by a particularly kind feeling toward women. He knew only the women of pleasure of the imperial city. Women, to him, were of the same consequence as flowers upon the table, for the fleeting pleasure of a moment. He cared for beauty only at the moment of its flowering. Of a better love, there is not a hint in Horace. For friendship — for which he had a talent — men satisfied him. They were dearer to him. In addition, his nature was philosophical and a little cold. He was too indolent to give himself over to a passion. He was one of the last and perfect examples of the cultivated pagan. After his death only six years were to elapse before the birth of Christ. And that other similar religion of the East, that taught pity and kindness, was now old by five hundred years, and its influence had not been felt in Rome.

Horace has pictured women of pleasure growing old, but there is no pity in his words. How

differently Villon wrote of them! And he, too, was of Latin blood. But life had dealt differently with Villon. It had taken all the bitterness and scorn out of his heart, until every thing human touched him. In addition, in Villon's day the pagan world was dead, another cycle of civilization had come, and one that was prone to repentance and tears. And Villon did not write in that courtly, cold, chiseled Latin, but in an humble, commonplace speech which was sympathetic to life's shabby griefs. His pictures of poor, old, faded women of pleasure, are true, but they were drawn with a heart that suffered.

Horace tried to arrange his life just as Goethe did, to procure for himself the greatest amount of leisure and calm. He was always more or less occupied in an attempt to banish disturbances. He spent his days in a sort of late autumn calm. Yet when he grew old (He died in the fifties.) it is play and love and wine that philosophical Horace regrets. He was like Thackeray who thought that youth was the only thing worth regretting all one's days.

Of these women, which one did indifferent Horace love? Which one held his heart? I like to think that it was Cinara. To me one of the most fascinating love stories in the world is the one hinted at in five little lines, in five separate and distinct poems of Horace, between the writing of which long intervals of years intervened.

The first mention is in the first poem in the fourth book of odes. This poem is addressed to Venus, whom he begs to spare him, because "I am not as I was under the good reign of Cinara." He goes on to explain that he is nearing fifty now and too hardened for soft commands. This proves that Cinara belonged to the days of his youth, and that after her all things changed. I should like to know just what he meant by the word *good*. Perhaps it was kindhearted, or not avaricious. He had probably remembered her for more than a quarter of a century, and it is of her he thinks first in connection with love and its delights, and youth. Then he advises Venus to go to the house of Paulus Maximus, who is handsome and young, and rich and noble, where she can be fittingly entertained under marble and a citron dome, near the Alban lake, and where there shall be music of the lyre and the Berecynthian pipe. Perhaps it was in a palace like this where he first met and loved Cinara, in that vanished youth which he now seems to regret. Paulus Maximus probably recalls to him his own youth and its passionate pleasures. Later on in this same poem he declares sadly, but without bitterness: "As for me neither youth nor women, nor to contend over the wine with fresh garlands on my temples delights longer." The ode closes with this exclamation to Venus: "I clasp thee in my dreams of night caught up in my arms; I

clasp thee in my dreams of night flying across the Campus Martius, and I pursue thee, cruel one, through the rolling water." Emotion like this is rare in Horace.

Horace considered himself an old man when he was not fifty. The wasteful pagan world loved youth so, that it thought nothing worth while but its first freshness. And the dissipation of Roman youths — in those last fleeting years of the pagan world — exhausted them and made them old. Juvenal exclaims: "While we are calling for wine, women and garlands, old age steals on us unawares."

The next mention of Cinara is in ode thirteen of the same book. It is in a poem to Lyce, and it is one of the bitterest he ever wrote. It makes him hard of heart to think that Cinara died and Lyce — who scorned him — lived on. This book was written on the threshold of old age, and it is evidently with Cinara that he connects his memory of youth. He has grown old like Lyce, but she who died is still young and he thinks of her with a consuming regret. It is in a way his own leavetaking of youth. In Carmen XI of this book he exclaims: "I shall never again love another woman." It may have been the memory of Cinara that impelled him to write this.

What was the age of Cinara when he knew her? Was it twenty, which Lope de Vega calls the age of enchantment in women? Of Lyce,

who lived, he wrote coarsely: "What have you left of her who breathed love and who stole me away from myself, happy next to Cinara? But Fate gave few years to Cinara, intending to preserve Lyce to rival in years the aged raven." Cinara was evidently the standard by which he measured. These words ring with a peculiar hopeless sadness, for which for him, there could be no amelioration.

We next find her in the seventh epistle of the first book. He is past fifty now. It is written to Mæcenas, and we learn from it that the health of Horace is not good, that his hair is turning, and that old age is on the way. He craves his powerful patron's pardon for remaining so long away. He declares: "But if you would have me depart anywhere (meaning Rome) you must give me back my vigorous constitution and the black hair of my narrow forehead. You must give me back again the power to babble over my wine as at the jilting of that wanton Cinara." Then he goes on to unfold a little story the germ of which is: "I beseech you by your genius to give me back my former life!" Here again Cinara is the mainspring of regret.

The last mention of her is in the fourteenth epistle of the same book. It is written to his steward blaming him for still longing for the old, gay life which they had known in Rome in their youth, and holding himself up as a model

of renunciation, exclaiming: "Me whom fine garments and dressed hair adorned, whom you know to have pleased venal Cinara without a price." His slave was his companion evidently in the old days and knew of Cinara. Who was Cinara? Was she a hetaira? She could not surely have belonged to that lower class of venal women called *lupa*, who cried their wares by the roadway. If his slave were handsome, she might not have despised him, because in Rome many things were possible and the attitude of the Greeks toward love was not yet dead. Where did he meet her? Where did he see her last? What was the cause of her early death? How did it affect him at the time? What had she been to him? Once he called her *good*, and now that he is old and weary he calls her *wanton* and *venal*. What was it that took her away from Horace? Was she a beauty so renowned that she attracted the eyes of Cæsar? Was this the reason that he did not see her again and dared not complain? Was this her real name? If so, why do we not find it in other writers of the period, if she were a hetaira famous for beauty?

Sometimes when I walk up and down my garden ways in the early evening, and the wind ruffles the blossoms like petticoats of silk, I fancy I catch a glimpse of her. Now, of course, she dwells with the flowers. In her brief girlhood she used to queen it royally with them, especially



on the first of April, when began the great festival in honor of Venus, in one of those luxurious villas of Baïæ which were built for love alone.

Thus it is that I dream of the face of a pagan woman to whom virtue was a thing unessential. Pagan women should have been painted as the Japanese paint flowers, without a soul — truthfully — but impersonally. It is a pity that there is not one whose face remains to-day! I wish that Pausias could have painted her as he did the mistress of Lucullus and that the picture had been preserved for me. I should like once to look into eyes in which there was no consciousness of grief, eyes that had not known fear, nor modern complexities.

It has been said that a dream is greater than reality because its forms are infinite. I have had my dream of Cinara. It gives me pleasure to think of her dancing for Horace. And when she did, it made him think of fields of yellow spring flowers and swaying buttercups. It brought back the breath of the fields. There was something about her that was detached and impersonal, that neither love nor dissipation could hold. It pleased him then, in the fervor of his youth, to take her away from her humble surroundings, to some splendid villa — lent him, perhaps, by Mæcenas — and there set her beauty fittingly. There, under his direction, nimble-fingered tiring women dressed her, now in East-

ern gauzes, now breasted and buskined with gems, but still she seemed cold and remote. Even at the feasts when she was crowned with the lapis that duplicated her eyes and the penciled skill of art had been expended upon her, she was still an alien among them. He was the ornament of that epoch-making court of Augustus and yet Cinara did not feel flattered by his favor. Perhaps he knew that never once did his presence deepen the midnight of her eyes.

Was she pointed out as she passed along the streets of the imperial city, in a silk-curtained litter, as the love of Horace? Was this something to be proud of which Cinara could not appreciate? Or did she love some one else, some one who was altogether different, who knew nothing of art and letters, of fair speaking, and fine and fastidious distinctions, some muscled gladiator, some soldier returned from the battle of Philippi, who had nothing to recommend him but love and his muscular arms? Was it of such an one that she dreamed at the feasts? Did impassioned exquisites say wonderful things to her as they reclined beside her at the banquet? As they drank her health from an amber Sidonian glass studded with gems, did they weave impromptu fancies about the deep blue of her eyes and about her hair? And did the others forget then their jesting, and listen to the fragile carving of the ivory Latin with a fine understanding of its value, and a wistful,

fleeting premonition that the end of this care-free, pagan world was not far away? And did they say how much more important the manner of saying a thing is, than the thing said? And did some one suggest that words are gems, and that their sound can give strange sensations? And Cinara? She was bored and wearied with all this. She dreamed the while of the kisses of some one else, who knew nothing of things like this, and of arms that were warm and strong.

Although Cinara had lived but few years and was fair haired and slender, she could not have served as a model for a Flemish madonna nor a mediæval virgin. The atmosphere of other centuries was upon her. There was a look in her eyes that the world of to-day does not know. Her hands were as lovely as Anne of Austria's, but they were pagan hands. They had not been taught the attitudes of prayer. Instead, they had tossed white doves and roses to the fanes of Aphrodite.

Perhaps instead of the Horace we know, the somewhat cold, court poet of Augustan Rome, there was a Horace we see less frequently, a lyric poet, who consumed his genius in vain dreams in presence of the baffling beauty of Cinara, and who knew he could never pen upon the papyrus the impassioned words he said to her.

E.

**A**FTER ALL THAT I HAVE WRITTEN spring does not come so sweetly to the southern prairie. We really have no spring. The bright, glittering winter is to-day, and summer to-morrow. In one night of magic the prairie is green. Upon it blossom strange flowers that I do not know. Wild plum and grape scent the air. Locust and catalpa trees turn white. Violets are blue beneath the scanty trees that border the rivers. Strange birds come back to timbered places. As snow melts in the Rockies, rivers are swollen to flood mark. Upon the yellow earth beside them lie sluggish bull-snakes three or four feet in length. There are miles of blossoming peach orchards of a marvelous pink, across which the south wind comes. But it is not so lovely as the misty spring of the north and the gaunt mountains that smoke with snow.

With spring the Indians come from the reservations to trade. The roads are black with processions of prairie schooners, from which peer weary, hard-featured faces that can not be glad with spring. Buck Indians go by in numbers, driving wild ponies for sale. Sometimes when I awake in the morning, I see an Indian's painted face pressed against the pane. E.

**S**UMMER FALLS FIERCELY HOT. There is little rain. The air is yellow. The earth is yellow. The prairie loses its green. And always a bright, hot wind sweeps past from the south, a wind that glitters like steel.

In the evening we ride out upon the prairie, which resembles a black, lustreless ocean under the night. Far out upon it, we stop our horses, and throw our heads back with delight, to enjoy the vast, unknown, black silences beyond. Always here there is a certain exhilaration, an atmosphere of youth and of triumph that makes undesirable things seem temporarily distant. I am enchanted by the beauty of the prairie nights. I lie awake to watch their changing phases; dewless—glittering.

The blistering day, too, is a thing of beauty, despite the corn that is shriveling and the cattle crazy with thirst. The ground in the orchards is covered with bursting yellow peaches showing hearts like suns.

After a payment on the ranches, the cow-boys come to town to amuse themselves. At night they dance outside the saloons, — riotously — the awkward dances of the plains, with half-breed

women, who wear their black braids tied under their chins, with prostitutes, with wind-browned creatures who cook upon the great ranches. Three-fingered Jack plays the fiddle, and Monte Tom calls off the figures. The cow-boys dance with their hats on and jingling spurs. They have hard, sharp features and the tiny waists of women. When they ride away at dawn toward the ranches, it is with bestial cries and the discharge of revolvers into the empty air. In the cool shade of a building almost any afternoon you can see a group of half naked Indians gambling at *monte*, all squatting upon the ground. The hands in which they twirl the cards are finely shaped and slender. Beside them are broken, gorgeously colored melons, with rows of black, shining seeds.

E.

ONE AFTERNOON WHILE I WAS SITTING comfortably under the maples, shots flew over my head. A man came running in through the alley and fell not far away. A cot was brought from the house. The man died upon it. While he was dying a little woman in fluted silk and white lace ruffles came and stood beside him. I can not forget how sweetly blue her eyes were — like gems. It was because of her that the man had been killed. When she went away again I noticed that little ropes of blood swung from the white lace ruffles at her wrists. But her eyes were just as happy and as sweetly blue as before. Gems, of course, can not grieve.

The dead man they buried upon the prairie where one is forgotten like a pebble dropped into the sea. The man who killed him went to prison for a week or two. The little woman in fresh silks and laces fluttered on to another border town, and fresh conquests. Was not that better than to die? Life has possibilities. Death has none.

Nothing lasts long upon the plains. Drouths, prairie fires, Indian uprisings, deaths, pass into the realm of things inconsequential in a way that would amaze an easterner.

On this dry, grass table-land, which is Kansas — the pedestal upon which the Rockies are placed — across which tirelessly nerve-racking winds sweep, the people have a certain mental exhilaration that is common to no other locality. The dry, intense light of the high plains affects the nerves through the eyes, causing a peculiar, distorting optimism. No one who lives here long escapes it. The penniless wanderer feels it quite as much as the prospective millionaire. (All people here are prospective millionaires.) They are literally drunk on air. Before their minds floats the mirage of a rose-colored future that annihilates poverty and the present. Even old people know it, too, this vision *couleur de rose*. Since people, like plants, are at mercy of the soil, it is the primal cause of the Kansan's extravagances. It accelerates life. It makes corn, cabbages, and cranks grow equally well.

E.



**I** LOVE THE LEAVES. I NOTICED FOR the first time to-day how the light that falls upon them is changing. It is yellow. It is the color of regret. This morning, too, I heard a strange wind in the trees. In its voice there was concealed a threat. At sound of it fear crept over my garden. Occasionally maple leaves flutter down. They flutter slowly, as if loth to go.

Do you remember how Madame de Sévigné loved the leaves? When she grew old and lonely — and was less amused by the life at court — she used to make a sort of pilgrimage to the wooded lanes of Livry to say goodbye to them. “I have come to spend the last fine days and to say goodbye to the leaves. They are still upon the trees. They have only changed color. Instead of being green they are like a sunrise — a many-colored sunrise.” Thus, she, with the grace of that fluent old French tongue — whose mistress she was — wrote to Bussy-Rabutin in an eventful autumn late in the Great Century.

E.

I AM THINKING OF IDLE PEOPLE TO-day. Idleness is not something indiscriminately to be reprimanded. In mediæval Germany, there was a saying that he who can not rest and do just nothing at all for a time, is possessed of a devil. It is said, indeed, to be a characteristic of people of genius. Old Montaigne thought it was so necessary a part of life, that he declared he would rather his servants would steal a little from him occasionally, than constantly to subject himself to the annoyance of searching out the culprits and punishing them. In addition, it is good to step out of the procession once in a while, and rest, and watch it sweep by. To keep up a continual rush of energy and effort is to do permanent injury to the silences that precede and follow us.

To have nothing to do for a time was the longing of that kindly old court jester of the Medici, *il mio diletto Berni*. I recall the plaintive grace with which he says: "*Io non sono persona punta ambiziosa.*" (I am not at all an ambitious person.) He would have found favor with Oscar Wilde, who asserted that ambition is the consolation of mediocrity.

Here is a character for you — and a charming one — Berni! To Americans his name sounds like a new sauce for a beef-steak or an advertisement for a cordial. It is not so often heard in Italy now, although his words and some of the phrases he coined are incorporated in the body of the language.

The Italians declare that their Tuscan wine loses its flavor if taken elsewhere. Berni is like it. He could not be acclimatized in our Saxon speech. He is for the improvisatori-loving Latins. He is peculiarly suited to their temperament. He was known as the man whose name sounds like a laugh — *riso simpatico*. That is a gracious title to fame. It deserves to outlast the centuries. Horace thought that his name must be engraved upon lasting bronze. Pushkin thought the same. Berni chose something different, the hearts of his people. He was the good friend of the great men of the Quattrocento. We find him mentioned constantly in the letters of that period, and almost always with some term of endearment. To pauper and prince this humble Medicean jester was *il mio divino Berni*, *mio dolce Berni*, the prince of all the satirists, our divine and gentle Berni. I do not know of a character in literature who was so universally beloved by the people among whom he lived.

There is a letter in existence written by Ilario "To All Christian Readers," which begins as

follows: "Now in the days of Clement the Seventh, there lived for more than twenty years at the Court of Rome, one, Messer Francesco Berni, a man of letters, who was greatly beloved of all the city for the gentleness and grace of his nature." He was born late in the fifteenth century. His life continued on into that marvelous sixteenth century which bore the Renaissance to its climax, and then saw it fade away again — far from the Tuscan hills — among the fields of France, at the court of an indolent monarch. His native village was Lamporecchio, in the valley of Nievole, which he tells us was a pleasant place beyond the Arno. He went to Florence when he was quite young to procure work. He was unsuccessful and lived there in poverty until he was nineteen. At that time he became secretary to Cardinal Bibbiena, who was his uncle. He calls this the beginning of slavery.

Now I quote more or less accurately what Berni has said of himself. He served the Medici or some member of their court as long as he lived. When his uncle died he was employed by the Bishop of Verona, who was chancellor to Leo the Tenth, a Medicean pope. Here he pauses to explain that he is still a slave who rebels against his chains. He detested his clerical duties which kept him on the go from morning till night. His wit and his charming personality made him a great favorite at the papal court, where the nights were

spent in gambling and in dissipation of all kinds. He is always complaining of lack of rest.

Berni was not at all the energetic, vigorous Tuscan; the indolence of the south was in him. He disliked effort of any kind, and loved only idleness and contemplation. When he was in the employ of the Cardinal he made a picture of himself in a poem which I am going to take out of its verse-form and translate in free prose. It is pleasantly self-conscious and ingenuous. He complains that his days are spent with a bundle of the Cardinal's letters the size of his body under one arm, and a bundle of written orders just as large, under the other arm. He never had an opportunity to do anything that he wanted to. He was not even free at night just so long as there was any one awake about the palace who wished to be amused. Being the receptacle for other men's joys and sorrows, he never had a chance to have any of his own. And he had such difficulty to keep from falling in love! Besides he did not think that he was at all bad to look upon, which made it more difficult. And he had a most amazing nimble tongue. In person he was tall, slender, dark, and swift and supple of motion. His eyes, however, were blue and there was a goodly space between them. He closes by explaining that he feels sure that he might have grown a good mustache, if his master had not objected to his wearing it.

I wish I could have seen that Florence to which Berni came from his little village beyond the Arno. They were busy there then. They were casting bronze, carving marble, hammering gold, and making colors glow on canvas. One of the gardens of time was in full flower.

One of the things that interests me particularly, is the time that Berni's longed-for idleness came to him. It was during that terrible visitation of the plague which Manzoni depicts in "*I Promessi Sposi*." Berni was in Rome at the time, secretary to Cardinal Bibbiena. At news of the approach of this loathsome disease, the church dignitaries and the rulers left. They snapped their fingers at calls of duty and priestly pity. The city was abandoned by the wealthy and the titled. Our gentle Berni was left alone behind. This was his first taste of leisure. This was the first time in his hard-working life that he did not have to run at somebody's orders. What he writes of it shocks us at first and finally amuses us:

*"Quest è quel secol d'oro, e quel celeste  
Stato innocente primo di natura."*

(This is that Age of Gold and that  
Celestial, innocent, first state of nature.)

The hideous harvest of death did not disturb him. He had a good time and he did not hesitate to say so. Not once—he tells us—was he out of bed before noon. He stretched himself

out on his back in the Cardinal's luxurious chamber, and clapped his hands for the servants to bring him food and the Cardinal's choicest wines. Here all day long, within the splendid rooms of this renowned palace, he wrote his jests, his heart overflowing with merriment, and laughed and laughed, while outside in the streets, night and day, the drivers of great wagons called: "*Bring out your dead! Bring out your dead!*"

"Why should I not be happy? I fear the slavery of daily toil far more than I fear death. And suppose I die of it? At least I shall be permitted to die in peace. There will be no notaries standing about to make my will. There will be no meddlesome people to keep asking: *Come stai? Come stai?*"

His poem descriptive of the plague is one of his most popular pieces. In it he gives a quaint opinion of the nature of the disease, which shows us the scientific knowledge of that day. He thinks it is a combination of all human ills, and that other diseases flow into it just as the rivers flow into the sea. When the plague came to an end, Rome's rulers came back. It was then the beginning of the carnival season. But our indolent jester did not even enjoy the carnival in the Eternal City. He could only regret the weeks that had preceded it, when he lay in bed half the day, and wrote his jests, and laughed, in that city reeking with death. He never ceased to

regret the time when he had been a great lord in deserted Rome.

The mock dignity and numerous prefaces with which his book of verses begins, are partly of the age, and partly Berni's peculiar personality. The opening poem is by his friend Il Lasca, who steps to the front and gravely speaks a little piece in honor of Berni, which is something like this: "All people whose hearts are not hard and unkind, but sensitive and generous, must come and do honor to our Berni, whom the muses loved so greatly they made him the first troubadour and master of the burlesque poets. To compare him with Burchiello, the barber, would be like comparing Charon, the demon, with Gabriel, the angel. This is followed by a still briefer poem by the same poet. Its title is — "Whosoever Reads." It begins with a line of Petrarch: —

*"Ye who listen to the varied rhyme of those  
caprices,  
Which Berni, the divine one, wrote  
Using the vulgar Tuscan tongue."*

He gravely assures us that all the Greek and Latin poets put together are not worth a sou when compared with Berni. Likewise he assures us that we may read the poems in all freedom, because Berni never offends the tongue with any wantonness of Tuscan speech. We venture to place a considerable doubt upon this last assur-



ance. Berni now comes out and makes his own little bow. He introduces himself in a manner that reminds us of Montaigne's introduction to the "Essays." "I wish to tell you, good people all, that the one who wrote this book was not at all an ambitious person, and he snaps his fingers at your opinion. He wrote the book to suit himself and not to make his memory famous. He *had* to write it, because the thoughts knocked so hard at his head that they would get out. He had it printed because his friends at court worried him to death by borrowing his manuscripts.

*"O! give me your book a while!  
Do let me take it!"*

Now if they want it, let them go to a shop and buy it!"

In the "*Rime*" we find good writing and merry Tuscan jests, and best of all, the exposition of a charming and sweet-tempered nature. The style is fine. It is elegant and flexible. Italian critics declare that he possessed all the graces of Catullus.

Vasari painted his picture, and then wrote the following concerning it: "The picture in this oval is of Clement the Seventh, painted life size, in his pontifical robes. . . . In the background I have painted many prelates and favorites among whom are . . . the Bishop of Verona and Messer Francesco Berni, a most witty poet. . . .

Prince I am very glad to see him . . . because whatever he wrote was subtle and witty and charming."

It had been prophesied grimly, by priestly pedants that all the followers of this pagan Medicean court, who dressed life in a truly Augustan splendor, possessed some of the imperial fatality of the vanished Cæsars they imitated, and would die young and of strange deaths. Many of them hastened to fulfill this prophecy. Blond Mirandola died of melancholy; handsome Giulano de Medici met death at hands of an assassin. And Berni — the date of whose death is not certain — did not live to be old, and the cause of it is wrapped in mystery. Some say Duke Alessandro murdered him; some say that it was Cardinal Medici himself who did it — and he had been Berni's good friend in those gay gardens of Careggi.

He who had lived a jester, died a tragic death at the hands of a prince. He was the true clown who was killed by his king.

E.

THE LEAVES ARE FALLING FROM THE arbor, or curling up, and the grapes are ripe. The arbor is roofed now with black-purple, pendant bunches swinging in the wind, and a rich, yellow light envelopes the garden.

I should like to make wine of some of these grapes. Do you remember those wine cellars of Rome which Horace tells us about, how they marked time? Upon each bottle was written the name of the consul and the events of the day. One bottle would tell you about Actium, where the battle was fought, and the fall of Antony. There were wines whose inscriptions called up memories of the stormy valleys of Thrace where winter reigns, of the roar of the Pontic pines, from whose wood that beloved boat (*phaselus ille*) of Catullus was made.

If I bottled my wine this autumn, each bottle would bear some inscription to *An Unknown*. Perhaps it would keep for me the memory of a summer that was passed, in that gayest of gardens — which men call youth.

Did you ever see Chardin's description of the wine cellar of a ruler of Ispahan in the seventeenth century? He says the precious liquid was bottled in Venetian glass, in rock crystal enriched with gems, in coral and in jade. E.

**I**T IS WINDY AND DUSTY. I CAN HEAR the soft *pietinement* of sand particles upon the roof. I think I shall not remain upon the plains to-day; I am going away. Sitting right here in my garden I have traveled a good deal. Yet I have no reputation as a globe trotter. At the same time I have seen the streets of fabulous cities which could equal any of Bagdad's "shrines of fretted gold." Who has the right to say, I should like to know, what countries he has seen who has sat by the fireside all his days!

First, to-day, I shall travel with Loti. He is a good companion and I enjoy him. I like his sensitiveness to things that are fine, and his distinction. I like his buoyant interest in travel and novelty and adventure. He has the southern warmth and imagination. I like to go with him to India (*L'Inde sans les Anglais*), to Stamboul (*Les Désenchantées*), to the orange-hued landscape of Algiers (*Le Roman d'un Spahi*). I am indebted to these books for hours of happiness and instruction. They do not grow old and I do not weary of them. They are always at hand ready to shelter me from disagreeable occurrences. They banish annoyances with the divine surety and

complacency with which it was the habit of good Queen Juno "to banish flies and gnats from Ida, at the hour of goblet pledge." From repeated readings throughout the years I know pages and paragraphs by heart. There is something in the prose of the Latin races that gives me a superlative pleasure. I think I see a splendor in them that perhaps is not there. As soon as I read the first lines of any of these seductive books, the magic commences. My surroundings have changed. Work and duties are no more. I am sailing over southern seas. Salt spray touches my face. I am filled with energy and strength. About me spreads a world of radiant summer, novelty, and adventure. An attractive strangeness envelopes me, and I am happy.

Not all people who travel in a garden as I do have been compelled to. Some have done it by preference. Consider, too, the discomforts that are avoided in my easy way of going from place to place. Do you recall this plaintive statement from Flaubert's "*L'Education Sentimentale*?" "He knew the melancholy of the packet boats, the awakening in chilly dawns under tents, the dizzy confusion of landscapes and ruins, the bitterness of sympathies interrupted."

Robert Burton — who had the reputation of knowing everything there was in the world to know — and who all but proved it in that strange book of his, "*The Anatomy of Melancholy*,"

writes: "Methinks it would please any man . . . to behold as it were all the remote provinces, towns, cities of the world, and never go forth of the limits of his study." There was Ariosto, too, for instance. It was his ideal of pleasure to travel in a garden. Whenever time and his duties permitted, he sought a sheltered corner of the garden of his princely protector, and there turned over the leaves of maps and books of travel. Marco Polo himself probably never saw a land that could compare with the one that Ariosto saw then.

Xavier de Maistre preferred a chamber to journey in. Do you remember his "*Voyage Autour de ma Chambre?*" That was a spirited, entertaining journey, too. I have taken it with him repeatedly. Lucian's "History," which he carelessly calls "Veracious," is merely an excursion to a non-geographical place which he names "The Blessed Isle." Exertion was distasteful to lazy Lucian, except that of the mind, and with the mind he lived prodigiously. Brave Cyrano of the faithful heart and chivalrous sword, took a journey to the moon in this same easy and inexpensive way. So you see that people who are bounded by a little garden and a slender purse, are not so greatly to be pitied.

Do not fail to take a trip with Stevenson. He is a gay, good-humored fellow, like Loti, and a first-class traveling companion. Go to Scotland

with him first. He has made Scotland as desirable and as lovely as Venice. He can show you a wonderful Edinburgh. Go, too, with him to see the black, dripping rocks and hear the thunder of the surge in "Night and the Merry Men," and that windy Spanish valley, between the mountains, splashed with the petulant light of autumn. Like Loti and Renoir, he lived in the land of youth.

Sitting right here in my arbor, in this humble prairie garden, with books and with engravings, I have really seen a good deal. In pictures in current periodicals of the north of Europe — in "*Jugend*" especially — I have watched spring come creeping over the Bohemian forests, then northward to the Valdai Hills, and on to the Finnish marshes. I have watched it wave its blossoming fruit tree boughs along the valleys of the Rhine. I can sit here at my ease and count the swallows flying over the roofs of that old Paris mad Meryon etched. Not even here upon the plains — in the great light — do they have such sweep and swing. From the paintings of historic gardens made by Rusiñol, I have received the keenest sense of the brooding spirit of generations that have gone. I have come near the poignant personalities that have frequented these gardens. For me they have been granted a renewal of visible life. With Sheffield and Freytag I have seen the primeval forests of Germany;

with Pushkin, Lermontov, and Mickiewicz, the mountain world of southern Russia; with Verhaeren, the cities of Flanders; with Alberuni, India the ancient. And with all of them I have felt the fascination that wanderers feel for the road, an emotion as old as time. Catullus, the Roman, confessed to it in the long ago. When the spring winds began to blow he was restless, and he thought of the bright cities of Asia, and his feet were eager for travel. (*Jam læti studio pedes vigescunt.*) There is magic in a road. Stevenson felt the urge of it always, and he confessed it in "Will o' the Mill," who longed to know where the river went. It was the cause of the attraction of that bright river of the south of France to Daudet. ("*Le Pape est Mort.*") It was one of the dominant influences in the life of George Sand. In fact art and life are merely parts of the history of the road. Along this road civilization traveled.

The Marseillaise was born of the road. Barefoot, defiant vagabonds on their way to Paris and the Revolution wrote it as they walked along. Petöfi, the Hungarian, wrote his book of lyrics while he was a wandering player, grateful for a "hand-out" from any one.

In the warm south the road is particularly conspicuous in letters. "*Il Morgante Maggiore*" is merry Pulci's dream-journey across the roadways of the sky, where he could look down upon



the world like a pleasant, outspread picture. Giotto, Petrarch, Leonardo, Tasso, were wanderers upon the road. The *Iliad*, the *Æneid*, the *Lusiados*, were wanderers' songs. So I do not complain because my garden looks upon the primitive Santa Fé trail, and not upon *Le Boulevard des Italiens*, nor the *Riva degli Schiavoni*. Nor do I long to be elsewhere, nor to have at my command the wings of the morning to fly to the ends of the earth. My mind can make possible for me that ancient dream of alchemists who desired "to flow through the veins of nature and to enjoy universal life." My mind shall be to me as were the winged shoes to Mercury or the magic cloak to Faust, and bear me wheresoever I wish. Even when the long sleep comes, still shall I go on, because death is only a continuation of the same long road.

E.

**M**Y GARDEN NEVER LOOKS TWICE the same. That is because I see it through changing moods. Every thing is new every moment. It is a strange satire upon intelligence that people can not find interesting things without traveling seas to reach them. It is certain that when they do reach them, they can not see them. It is the old story of driving the horse to water.

All things are everywhere for him who has eyes. Whittier believed that "nature will unveil as many of her secrets to me among my narrow garden paths as to the most accomplished globe trotter." Sir Thomas Brown declared: "We carry within us the wonders we seek without."

Epicurus found Jupiter's brains in a bowl of Cytheridian cheese, and the tongues of nightingales in onions. You see what a practical philosopher he was! Gold could not have done that. To be able *to see* is a rare thing. And it is just as necessary to learn to do this, as to learn to dance or to paint. The developed power does not belong to any one at birth. The more highly trained the vision, the more its possessor lives. The best training for this — this learning to see

— is to look at pictures, to contemplate the ideals which great painters have created, to follow for a while *their seeing*. This helps to correct, and to break our own stiff and commonplace vision. They literally *open our eyes*. People who can see, need no other occupation to fill in that long space which stretches between birth and death. Pictures are little enchanted islands in the great, uncharted sea of the unknown, where we can rest a while, and amuse ourselves. It is not money and travel that make men see. One sees only with eyes highly trained and sensitive. The untrained vision is harsh, uneven, fragmentary. Only art can weld it temporarily into unity and strength.

George Eliot did not inherit this possession in any large degree. Her mind was akin to Emerson's in a certain lack of æsthetic development. Neither of them found Italy particularly lovely. In her eyes, Rome was neither lovely nor picturesque. Her hasty comments upon the pictures and sculpture of the Eternal City betray a nature insensitive to color and line. She used her eyes as a diligent and praiseworthy pedagogue, not as an artist and a connoisseur. Peculiarly enough it was the sensuous in art that appealed most to her — Rubens, Poussin. George Eliot criticized the great art of Italy with crude, unsympathetic eyes, or else with a dull and overwhelming sense of her own importance. In her judg-

/

ment there was the unusual combination of sensuality and coldness. On that Italian journey of hers in 1860 she seemed dead to every thing except what the world was saying about herself. How unlike was her attitude toward Greek and Roman art to that of the Brownings, Shelley, Byron, Landor, Symons, and all the Germans (except Schiller), Goethe and Winkelman leading the list. She did not know that the eye must be trained (as well as the mind) unless some marvelous grace of nature gives an highly instructed vision. Her first face to face encounter with the impassioned art of the south, gave her an uncomfortable mental and visual wrench. She came to it with a cold, self-opinionated, insular superiority. Her sympathy for sorrow in life was keener than her sympathy for beauty. Her criticism of painting was usually upon the expression in the eyes. That settled for her the question of greatness or triviality. She did not like the drawing, composition, or coloring of Tintoretto, Veronese, Angelo. Of Milan cathedral she wrote: "It no longer satisfied my eyes." Of Luini: "He has not power enough for any composition of high character." She was a highly instructed woman, rather than one of rare taste and perception. She was always something of a super-educated pedagogue.

Schiller declared that he had no desire to see Italy or its art. In a letter to Humboldt he

writes: "Unfortunately the great art of Italy and Rome are not for me, because I have neither interest nor taste for plastic art." And Matilde Serao exclaimed in her "Letters of a Traveler" (*Lettere d'una Viaggiatrice*): "Who can ever get away from the fascination of Rome!" She speaks of the pleasure of "seeking in Rome not only the vast conceptions of sovereigns, the enormous undertakings of art completed miraculously, the traces of an hundred tyrannical and magnificent wills, but the soul of Rome which is found in the shadow of a park, in the colors upon the horizon, in a rose gathered at entrance to the catacombs . . . in a little forgotten church in an unfrequented quarter. . . ." How much greater in extent — and nobler — and more circumstantial, and sensitive, was the Greek-Italian woman's comprehension of "*alma Roma*" than the English woman's. A new — or a different — idea has to enter an English mind by the back door.

When I read the account of that early journey of George Eliot's to Rome, I recall involuntarily some words of Thoreau: "I look upon England to-day as an old gentleman who is traveling with a great deal of luggage, trumpery, which he has accumulated from long housekeeping, which he has not courage to burn; great trunk, little trunk, band-box and bundle." The English have never been critics in the first class. Only the Latin mind has achieved this supremely. To be con-

vinced it is merely necessary to recall Quintilian, Sainte-Beuve, Taine, Brunetière. Match them if you can, you whom I accuse of anglophilism!

How unlike were the eyes of Goethe and Schiller! The former called Italy "that fortunate dwelling place of man," and wrote and spoke of it always with the greatest love and enthusiasm. He wrote to Schiller: "I could only look and look and admire." Addison was cold to the impassioned art of the south. He found it scarcely worth the effort of mention. But Lessing was different. He said in a letter to his brother Karl in 1775: "This little foretaste (Venice, from which place he was sending the letter) arouses in me the old desire . . . to live and die in Italy."

Schiller — delightful creator that he was — wrote letters filled with complaints and physical discomforts. There was not much of the comfortable, sensuous pagan about him. For little things he had the sharp eye of a puritan. The joyous vision of the poet did not bring him happy forgetfulness. This is a little peculiar coming as he did between Winkleman and Goethe, with their exhaustive knowledge of antique life and appreciation of its unfevered calm.

Dostoievsky, too, was miserable in the south of Europe. His body and soul were so warped with suffering, that the gay Latin cities were a reproach to him. In addition, he disliked travel.

He hated Berlin. "I left that wearisome Berlin as speedily as possible. I could only endure for one day those wearisome Germans, who get on my nerves and make me rage."

I should like to see Italy as it looked to Heine when he wrote "The Florentine Nights," or as it looked to Goethe when he composed "The Roman Elegies." And I should like to see the pictures of the south of Europe as they were mirrored in the twenty-three-year-old eyes of Rubens on that first enchanted visit, or the pictures of the Low Countries as they looked to Fromentin in his maturity. They had eyes. They could see.

E.

**T**HIS MORNING I TOOK MY CATALOGUES with me to the garden. I turn their pages pleasurablely, a pencil in my hand, marking the books I wish to own. This effort is quite useless because I have no money with which to purchase. But I keep at it just the same. I do not know of anything I do more carefully. You should see my catalogues. They represent the chief languages of the earth. And I recall just now Hammerton saying that no one can read fluently more than two languages. And there was Milton who read them almost all — ancient and modern. And the author of "Vathek," too, not to mention Jeremiah Curtin, and a dozen others.

Sometimes I put in a day trying to decide between different books. The fact that I have no money with which to buy either book does not change my pleasure in the least. After I have purchased my library, then I build a house and arrange a room in which to keep it. I do this with such care that I could find any book in my phantom library on a dark night — without the help of a candle. If I had money I should not enjoy buying books half so much. It would lose its distinction then. It would become common-



place, something that any one could do. I really prefer to be "a lord of dust, an emperor of dreams." Money is merely a sort of pleasant vulgarity. It is one of the soft and padded cushions for the couch of mediocrity. One should have the love of fine things in one's heart, their comprehension in one's brain, and then leave their possession — which is the insignificant thing — to the Philistine.

E.

**N**IG, MY CAT, SHARES THE GARDEN with me. I wish you could see Nig! She is as black as ebony and she has been washed and brushed until she shines like silk. Her eyes are green, and she has the most engaging suppleness. No trained danseuse can equal my Nig, nor possess such music of muscles. In this ease of movement, this unflagging physical fitness, there must be pleasure that is considerable.

When she is angry she is good to look at. She lashes her sleek body with her tail, every hair bristles with rage, and her green eyes become yellow as topazes. She is really a tiger whom years have made harmless and diminutive, without eliminating her primitive emotions.

Fable insists that Nig has had nine lives. That is why she feels so superior to me who am limited to one. She scorns my garden, too, because her memories are of a past that is prodigious. In Egypt, the ancient, they worshipped her, my Nig. They carved her face in indestructible stone, and left her looking out across the desert. And the expression upon that face the suns of centuries have not greatly changed. It is still subtle and cruel and untrustworthy.

Very likely she knew Thebes the rose-hued and its palaces of terra cotta, towered over by giant lotus blossoms painted pink and blue. Sometimes at sunset when she is quiet, and her paws are stretched out straight in front of her, side by side, in that hieratic attitude of her ancestor, the Sphinx, and she is looking ahead oblivious of me, I wonder if she is recalling that prodigious desert sky-line fretted with gigantic blossoms hewn of stone?

E.

**I** HAVE FINISHED HUSKING THE CORN for dinner. It is not deeply yellow like corn grown in the north. It is pale. I think perhaps it resembles the Orlov pearls.

A basket of vegetables has just been brought to me by a farmer who lives on the other side of the Arkansas. The skins of the onions are lovely considered as delicately woven tissue. Faint spirals of color, like fading rainbows, slip across them, and arranged with the greatest nicety. Chinese potters tried to make the surface of a certain porcelain like them, which, when they partially succeeded, they named "onion-skin." The brush of Chardin painted them with love and zest. The red of the beets I can decompose in my eyes into deep and angry blues, that flush again with violet, and mount to red. Shelling cranberry beans is a pleasure almost equal to diving for pearls. After the long, protecting pod is opened, each bean is covered with a white, sparkling gauze, to protect the delicate circle of the bean, which has bright dots of enamel upon a surface just touched with grey. Upon a few I have found dots that had the sad and wistful blue of chalcedony. The heart of a freshly

cut cabbage is just the hue of the huge ivory objects African kings have carved. And this changes by the subtlest gradations to wet, refreshing green.

When I unpacked my basket of vegetables this morning, it exhaled the freshness of night on the plain, and something of the bitter scent of prairie weeds. It seems foolish to envy wealth, or to bother one's head about warrantee deeds, banks, loans and the like, when we all inherit the earth. Nothing that is really fine can be purchased — *with money* — because its possession must be universal and belong to all.

E.

**I** WHO LOVE THE COUNTRY WRITE TO you who love the city. Not many love so well the places where people are not as I. Lamb was like you. He cared only for the stones and roofs of London. But that was because he had been thirty-three years in a counting house. For that period of his with the East India Company, I have the liveliest pity. In a letter to Wordsworth he remarked: "I have no passion for groves and valleys . . . so fading upon me from disuse are the beauties of nature." He even declared " . . . a garden was the primitive prison, till man luckily sinned himself out of it."

I had red raspberries for breakfast this morning which makes this a remarkable day. I wish you could have seen them piled upon powdered ice, with yellow cream on top of them. I recall a dish of berries that Renoir painted that has just this luscious ripeness. Red raspberries are rare upon the plains. Here we seldom see anything but the black raspberry. And they are not home grown.

The eating is made up of many pleasures. Just as soon as their odor strikes my face, the present vanishes and I am a child again — careless and free — in the old, bleak, mountain pastures. E.

HOW FOOLISH TO INSIST UPON SEEING a woman whose presence might not please you when according to this old story I am about to tell you, you could better create one to suit yourself.

*Hæc fabula dicit.*

The land which we call Persia was once Iran. And there the roses bloomed prodigiously. So great was their richness that they were cultivated everywhere, and the word was upon the tongues of the people. Indeed so far went this love for a flower that the divisions of their books were called not *chapters*, as ours are called, but *roses*. And at other times, "*Gate-Ways*"—presumably to gardens of roses. This which I am about to relate is the first leaf of the one hundred and fifty-first rose of a sacred book called the *Tuti Nameh*.

In the heart of central Iran it is as if the gaunt arms of ancient mountains held up emerald-green valleys for the gods to refresh their eyes upon. Among these mountain-valleys are white, earth-walled villages, in which are mosques built of tiles so blue that the eye can not distinguish them from gigantic turquoises.

In the mysterious streets — which are walled — move forms of women in pantaloons of silk — pink, yellow, green — short, embroidered jackets, and thrown over all, gleaming, gold-wrought gauzes. And through these streets float tinkle of laughter, murmured words of love, and scent of roses. Gardens are hidden behind the walls, and from them one hears the sound of running water.

From one of these gem-blue villages three shepherds were sent to pasture the sheep. They grieved to leave their village. They were sad in the unpeopled valley above which the gaunt, grey mountains rose. They had no one to talk with, because each day each one took his part of the herd to a different water spring so that they spent the days alone with the sheep. So greatly did loneliness and silence prey upon them they all but fell ill. They lost heart. They lost interest in their duties.

One day the first shepherd went to a new valley that was even higher and nearer to the deathless summits, whose silence and impressive outline instilled an unknown feeling that resembled reverence. He fell upon his knees in the quiet of the fields. He prayed for something to relieve his loneliness. When he arose and opened his eyes he saw beside him on the ground a piece of wood the size and shape of his body. Beside the wood were chisels, hammers, knives.

What should he do with these things which



had fallen from above in answer to prayer? The idea occurred to him to carve of the wood a companion. And he decided at length that it should be a woman.

Day after day he worked upon it. He forgot his loneliness. In the morning he was the first to set out with the sheep because he did not wish to miss a moment of daylight. In the evening he was the last to turn toward camp. His companions noticed the change. They saw he was happy but they did not know the cause.

When the statue of wood was finished and showed the form of a woman — because he had done his work well — he took it with him to the camp for his companions to see.

The next morning the second shepherd prayed in the valley where he fed his sheep that a companion be given him. When he arose from his knees and opened his eyes, he found beside him paints, brushes, jewels, veils, and silks. He understood. He drove his thirsty sheep back to camp. With the paint he painted the bare wood to resemble the women he had known in the gem-blue villages of Iran. Then he dressed it in silken pantaloons, and jacket. He placed gems upon wrists, throat, brow. Over all he flung the transparent veil.

That night when the other shepherds came from the hills late, under a high, clear moon, that hung above the great, grey mountains like

an exiled, pallid rose, they saw the statue robed and dressed. The third shepherd fell upon his knees before it and exclaimed:

“Beautiful hands — beautiful feet, which I bend to kiss! Lips that I so gladly would love, I beg you to speak to me!” Because of the sincerity of prayer the statue lived, moved, spoke. And with such grace, such gentleness, that the hearts of the three were enslaved.

The first shepherd declared: “I will leave the sheep for you two to tend. I will take this woman whom I made and return to my village. There I will marry her and be happy.”

The second shepherd replied: “What right have you to do that? It was I who made your piece of wood resemble a woman. It was I who gave her this gown of silk, this veil, these gems. It is to me she belongs.”

The third shepherd interrupted: “I should like to know what right either of you have to her? It was I who gave her life. To you two she was nothing but a stick of wood. I prayed. The gods answered my prayer. They gave her life — *for me.*”

This argument continued, growing fiercer and fiercer until they came to blows. Then the beautiful woman who had been made out of wood by the sincerity of prayer, fearful of what might happen, when she found that she could not put an end to their anger, fell upon her knees and

prayed for help. Straightway the first two shepherds were changed into a white horse, which stood saddled and bridled and ready to receive her. The third shepherd became a bow of such might and magic that when it was drawn an arrow flew in to fit it, and killed the person at whom it was pointed.

She mounted the horse, took the bow, and set out. The snow leopards and the mountain lions that started to attack her, the magic arrow killed. At length when there were no more leopards and no more lions to bar the way, the arrow floated in front of her, its head making the road along which it was her duty to travel. She was obedient. *She kept to the road that was made for her feet to go.*

Thus endeth the first leaf of the one hundred and fifty-first rose of the book of wisdom which is called the *Tuti Nameh*.

*De te — fabula.*

E.

**L**OCUSTS ARE LOUD IN THE TREES. Autumn will be dry. Every day the plains will grow more barren. But through this rainless period the sky is at its finest. There is really no more splendid sky than hangs over Kansas. In fact it is the only theater we have here and it is an unrivaled place for display. Nowhere else can you behold such scenery, such sumptuous and resplendent cities as God builds here with the clouds. Here are battlemented palaces, and high bastioned moats worthy the chivalric ardor of Don Quixote. Here are white colonnaded marbles and fluted soaring towers, as caressing to the eye as any the Moorish Caliphs set in Granada. The prairie sky with its changing mass of white billowing clouds has almost fulfilled one of my maddest wishes, which is to open my eyes every morning in a city that is new, strange, and delightful.

To be sure the sky has not that deep, swirling, Algerian blue, that makes the heart giddy with joy, which Dabadie shows us in "Summer in Bonzareah," nor that dry, dust-powdered blue peculiar to deserts, nor the cold, clean blue that wounds like a knife, which tops high mountain regions. But instead a fine, even, individual blue all its own, with certain very definite affiliations with promise, youth and exhilaration. E.

WINTER IS ALMOST UPON US. THE leaves are gone and the trees are bare. Empty blue-jay's nests decorate them. My garden shows only graceless bunches of dried stalks. Despite the cold there is still a wanderer of summer here — a mocking bird who has neglected to migrate. He is sitting on the lowest branch of a corner maple looking disconsolate. I have warned him that it is time to be up and away, but he does not heed my warning. Now he is moving his long, thin head warily to look about. He is searching for his old flower friends. He seems grieved and dismayed at finding the garden so lonely and faded. He feels like an aged Rip van Winkle who awoke to find a world grown old. Now he is flying across to another tree, over the top of the lily bed. He is uncomfortable here, too. Since he can not find the lilies he is looking in the direction of the daisies. No, they can not be found! Nor the roses nor the hollyhocks nor the golden glow! Now he flutes a little song that is sadder than the ruin of summer, and inclines his head in my direction, as much as to ask me what I think of it. I have just pointed out to him the nests of his old bird friends, empty

within the trees, and I have asked him if he expected summer to last forever. He stopped his weird song at this and looked at me gravely and reproachfully. He forgot his mimicry and his malicious gibes. Even a mocking bird ought to know that anything so sweet as summer can last only a little while.

E.

**Y**OU SAY THAT I AM FADING AWAY  
from you, fading away within just such a garden  
labyrinth as King Henry the Eighth caused to  
be made at Hampton Court, from which no one  
unaided could find the exit?

Does not that prove that I am not really a  
woman at all, but only a nymph — a creation of  
the mind of summer?

E.

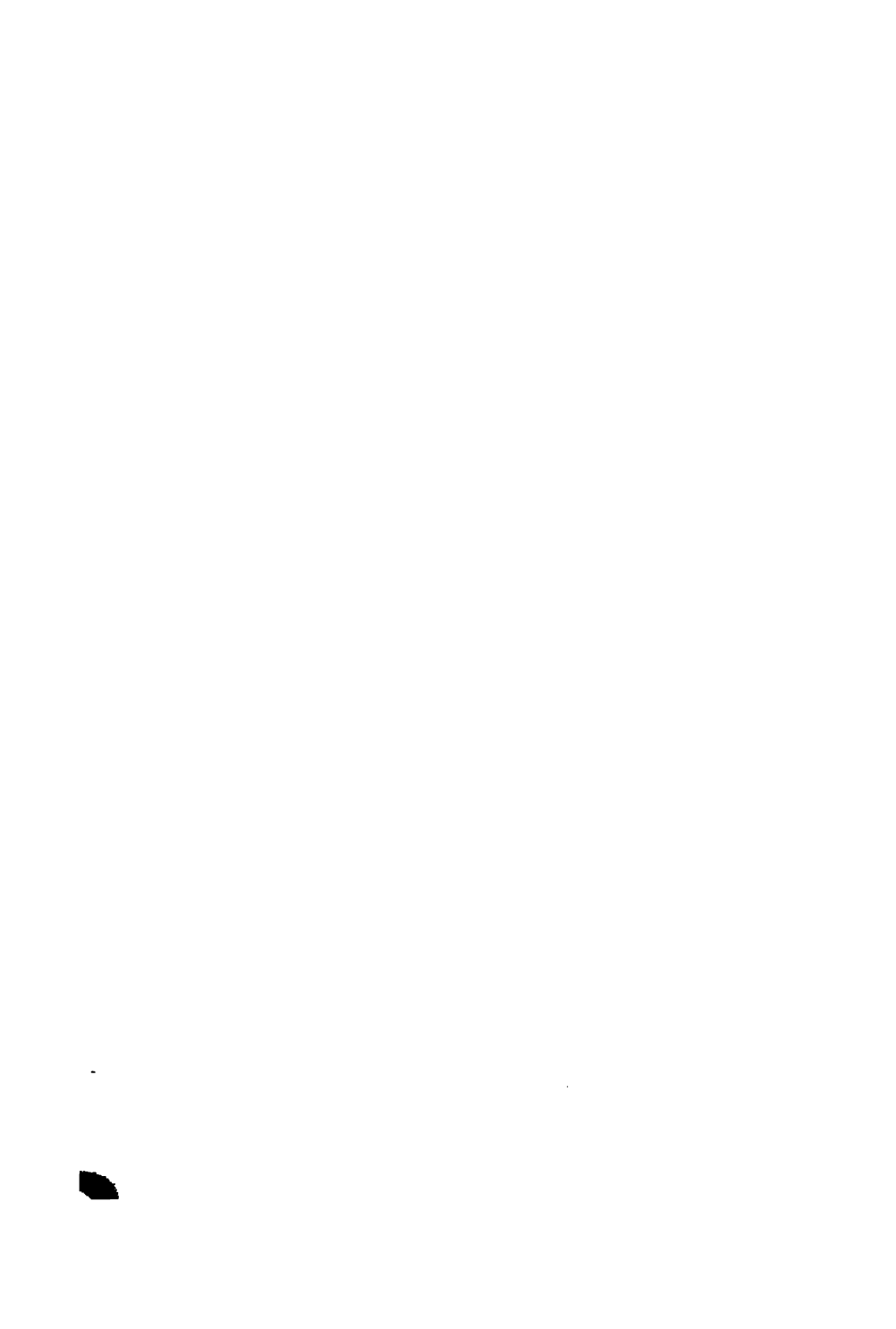
NO—NO—NO—NO! IF I SHOULD SEE you I might like you — (And who can tell how well!) — and then I might tell you how to find your way into this enchanted, phantom world of pleasure which is mine, and that would not be right. You belong to the world that is real. It is I that am the illusion. I have been years in discovering for myself — like a modern Columbus — this delectable land of the mind, where I am superior to life and time, and where things that vex and annoy can not reach me.

Nothing can last but a little while anyway, it doesn't make any difference what it is. The future, however, belongs to all, and it is a gigantic rose of a million petals whose folded leaves shelter — for you — some fresh delight.

You have the best of it, have you not? Are you not in the land where dreams — *so they say* — come true?

E.





## IN THE CITY

**I** FOUND YOUR LETTER UPON MY arrival telling me that an ocean is now between us, so these last words will go speeding after you on the white wings of the sea.

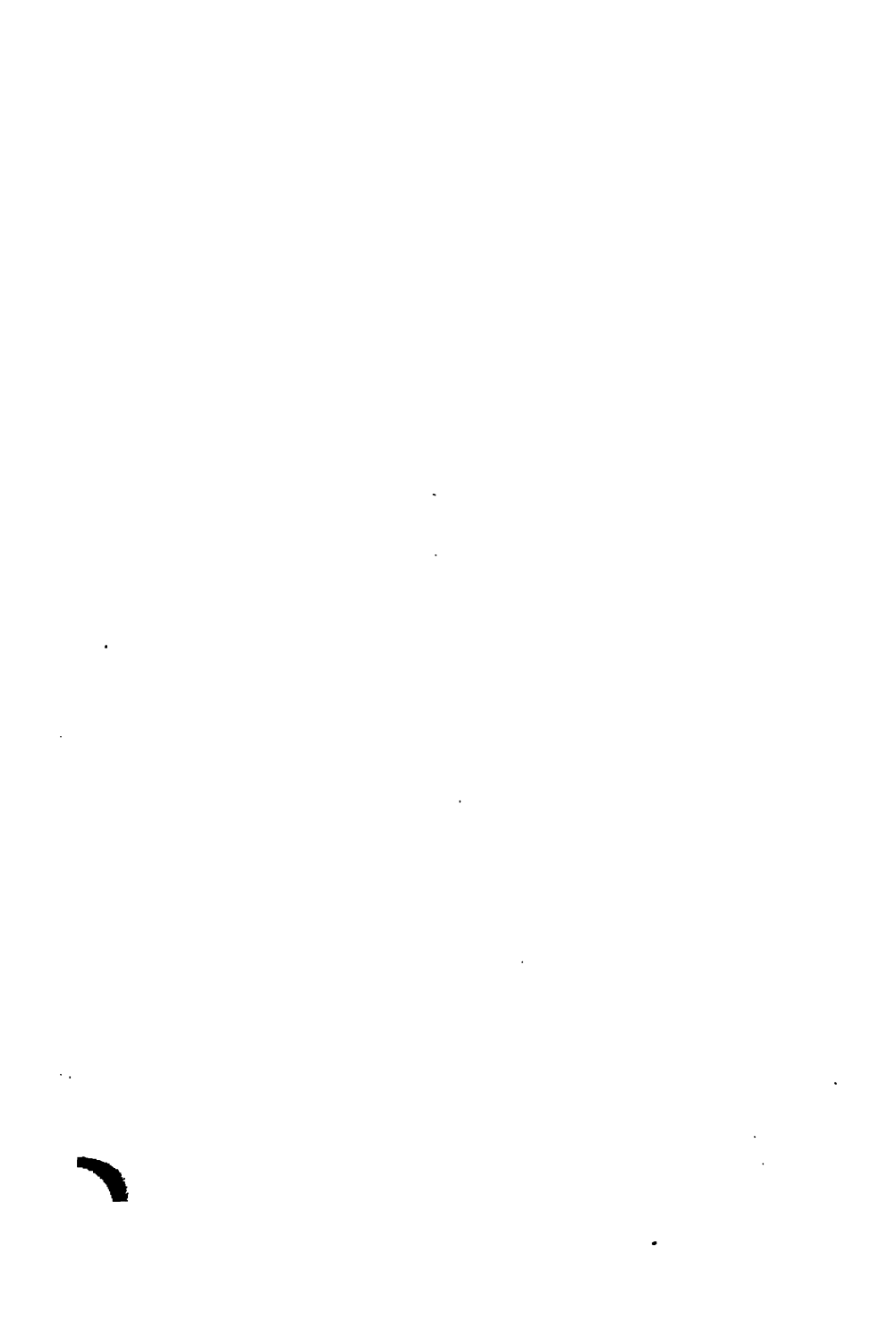
With them I am sending — in the calligraphy of China — the seal of the God of Laughter.

When you look up at night — on the other side of the globe — at the strange planets swinging above you in space, do you suppose you can tell which is ours?

E.









**THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY**  
**REFERENCE DEPARTMENT**

11 01700

